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THE WHITEST MAN IN THE MINES A STORY OF THE GOLD FEVER BY

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CHAPTER I.

EVENING IN DOG-TOWN.

"Ef you never was in Dog-Town, stranger, my advice is, don't go thar unless you kin shoot, on sight. I'm gwine thar."

That was what the gentleman on a broncho, who overtook the mild-looking stranger with a wheelbarrow, said to him, when he was asked the way to Dog-Town.

The gentleman on the broncho had a red nose and hair to match; though the red of one was natural, while the other had been induced by long and steady application to the coloring process, after the fashion of a meerschaum pipe.

He was dressed in the useful, but not ornamental habiliments which prevail in the mining-regions, wherever they may be, not guiltless of rags, and decidedly odoriferous with stale tobacco and whisky.

The young man with the wheelbarrow was slender and young, with a dark, handsome face and straight black hair, worn rather long, hanging on each side of a serious face, giving him much of the look of an Indian. He was dressed with a neatness very rare to see in those parts, and had the air of a decent mechanic; his attire being suited to hard work.

He looked up at the gentleman on the broncho, and answered him, in an innocent sort of way:

"EF YOU NEVER WAS IN DOG-TOWN, STRANGER, MY ADVICE IS, DON'T GO THAR UNLESS YOU KIN SHOOT, ON SIGHT. I'M GWINE THAR."

"I never shot in my life, except with a bow and arrow. But why should I not go to Dog-Town?"

The gentleman on the broncho stared at him from head to foot, as if he had come across a curious natural phenomenon, before he replied:

"Waal, stranger, ef you never did them things, my advice is *don't go thar*, fur ye may be sorry afore ye've b'en thar two days. The Dog-Town boys air a hard crowd to tackle, now, you kin jest bet your bottom dollar on that. Don't say I didn't tell ye, when ye git h'isted."

The young man with the wheelbarrow bowed his head with a gesture of politeness rare in the mines, as he answered:

"That is very kind of you, sir; but I must go thar; for I promised my mother I would."

The gentleman on the broncho shrugged his shoulders, and shook his bridle as he replied:

"All right, stranger. Good-mornin'. Hope yer mother 'll know ye, when yer git back ter her, ef yer ever do."

And with this rather uncomfortable warning, the gentleman on the broncho departed, leaving the young man with the wheelbarrow to trudge on his way, following the trail of the pony.

To tell the truth he was not far from the mining-settlement of Dog-Town, and he soon became aware of the reason for the name of the place, as he approached it, from the irruption on him, from all quarters, of a regiment of dogs, that came barking and howling round, if they meant to attack him.

There were several savage-looking curs, with a large sprinkling of the bull-dog in their make-up; other rough brutes, with terrier, collie and hound, mixed up in inextricable confusion in their pedigrees, and one big blood-hound, that was the only good-natured animal in the lot; for he wagged his tail as if he thought the new-comer might be a friend.

The young man did not seem to be at all alarmed at the proximity of the dogs; for he pursued his way quietly, with a cheerful word or two to the animals, as they came near him; and, to the wonder of several onlookers in the town, not a dog touched the stranger, but trotted along beside him, with an occasional bark, that gradually subsided into a grumble, and finally closed altogether as they watched him but seemed to have settled that he meant no harm to the settlement.

And so Louis Badeau entered Dog-Town, for the first time in his life.

There was not much to see, as far as architecture was concerned. Dog-Town was chiefly composed of tents, or low huts with tent tops, and the only building of more permanent character was a frame house of two stories, that flaunted along its front the legend:

"EUREKA HOUSE.

WINES, BRANDIES & LIQUORS."

The rest of the town was scattered along the sides of a ravine through which ran a stream, holding a series of little dams, each with a number of dug-out cradles along the top, where the miners washed for gold, and found, in the mud, enough to reward them for the most part; though there were rumors that the stuff was getting played out.

The stranger took his way through the midst of the settlement, his wheelbarrow in front of him, and the first symptom he had of the character of the place was when a little black-headed man, with an unmistakable brogue, called out, as the wheelbarrow passed his dam:

"Ah, come out o' that, ye black-muzzled spalpeen! Is it Barney O'Toole ye're after mockin' wid yer wheelbarrow? Fur two cints I'd knock the hull face aff ye!"

But as he did not move to execute his threat, the stranger took no notice of it, but pursued his way quietly, till he reached the extremity of the settlement, at the upper part of the stream. Here there were fewer dams; for the course of the water had become more rapid, the banks being closer together, and the miners had not thought it worth while to stay in that vicinity.

The scattered tents and log shanties were at the lower end of the stream, especially at a place where the water had made a pool; and in that vicinity the claims were of small size, and very carefully staked out.

The strife for the precious metal in that quarter was keen, and the men worked early and late, while quarrels were frequent, as the new-comer found out, before he had been in the settlement many minutes.

He took his humble barrow up the stream, a little above where the topmost tent had been pitched, and halted at a place where the stream made a bend and spread into a broad shallow, before entering the maze of dams.

A clump of trees had sprung up at this point, promising shelter from the sun when the next day should come; and the stranger halted there and unloaded his barrow, with a care and deliberation that was a feature of all his movements. He took from the load a small tent, made of the lightest sort of duck, went to the little grove to cut sticks, and set it up.

The miners were still at work, for it wanted an

hour to sunset; and he was left all alone at his occupation, till he had set up the tent, and bestowed therein all of his little belongings. They were simple enough, consisting of some blankets and a waterproof poncho to spread on the ground, with a sack of clothes and the tools with which he had to do his work—a pick and shovel, with a crowbar besides.

He had just set these last up against the tree which sheltered the side of his tent, when his attention was arrested by the sound of shots down the stream, and, lifting his eyes to see what was the matter, he perceived a group of about a dozen men, in the midst of the camp, by the pool where the most valuable washings were to be found, engaged in a fierce fight with each other, shooting viciously, stabbing like fiends, their long knives glittering in the light, while the rest of the miners were staring at them, resting on their picks, as if the thing were simply an exhibition got up for their amusement.

The pistol-firing was of the relentless and savage character that proceeds from men who are brave or desperate to rashness.

They fired at each other at a few feet distance and stood up to the battle without a sign of flinching, the blood spurting from their bodies, so that the young man could see it a hundred yards off.

Then there was a shriek in the voice of a woman, and a girl with long black hair rushed down into the midst of the fray as if she had no fears, catching first one man, then the other, from behind, and pulling him out by the hair when the war of shots and stabs subsided as suddenly as it had begun, and the participants in the fray dispersed to their holes in the ground where they began to dig away as if their lives depended on it.

All but one who lay still and another who had to be helped away to his tent, so that the young stranger came to the conclusion that the gentleman on the broncho, who had advised him not to come to Dog-Town, had meant him well.

But Louis Badeau, in spite of his quiet looks and modest ways, had come to Dog-Town to stay; and the only effect on him of the fracas he had just witnessed was to cause a slight compression of his lips and the muttered remark:

"I shall have to take care of myself, I see."

Then he went to his tent and from the recesses of the blankets where they had been concealed he brought out a queer-looking contrivance in those parts in the shape of a bow and arrows of Indian manufacture, which he left covered by the edge of the blankets, but so that he could get at them in a moment.

Then he set to work to cook his humble supper, which was of the same character the rest of the camp indulged in, consisting of salt pork and flour, which he made into "flap-jacks" in a little frying-pan.

By the time he was ready to eat, the rest of the miners were out of their holes and at their fires, which dotted the valley with lights like stars, most of them being in the open air; for the settlement was one of a few weeks' duration only and the chimneys were at a discount in Dog-Town.

By the time Louis Badeau had finished his supper, the camp had begun to put on a different appearance from that which it had worn in the daytime. Then every one had been hard at work, with an occasional fight, but as soon as the darkness closed in, the noise began.

The Eureka House was lighted up from cellar to attic; and the sounds of music and loud singing came from its walls.

The song was taken up, first in one tent, then the other; the shrill piping of of women coming in to swell the chorus, at intervals.

It was not long before other noises were added to make the camp a pandemonium and Louis Badeau saw a crowd of men coming toward his little tent, while the sound of their frequent oaths told that they had come on hostile—or at least practical joking intent.

The young man softly rose and took the bow, with which he stole off into the grove behind his tent, and awaited the approach of his tormentors.

That he had not been mistaken in his surmise, became apparent when the leader of the party halted outside the tent and shouted:

"Helloa, stranger! come aout and pay yer footin', like a man, ef ye don't want to be snatched bald-headed."

The hidden one made no reply, and the disturber continued:

"No use a-sulkin' hyar, neighbor. We ain't the boys to take any back talk. Come aout of that, and pay yer footin', or we'll rattle the old shebang raound yer ears."

Then, as there was still no reply, he went to the tent and shook the pole violently, reiterating, with many oaths, the invitation to "come out and pay his footing."

Then came a laugh from the rest, while one man cried:

"The darnation skunk's run away. Let's turn his old tent inside aout."

No sooner said than done; and the young man had the happiness of seeing his tent overthrown in a twinkling, and the contents thrown out on

the grass, when the ruffians roared with laughter, and another shouted:

"Let's have a bonfire, boys. Who's got a match?"

CHAPTER II.

A SURPRISE PARTY.

THE next minute came the click of a match and the light shone out, as the man who had produced it stooped down to set fire to the tent.

Louis Badeau trembled as he saw the intent of the reckless ruffian, who was about to destroy the little property he had, and called out:

"Gentlemen, don't. It is all I have in the world!"

He was answered by a wild burst of laughter, as the man who had lighted the match threw it on the grass, with the shout:

"That's the sucker, boys! Go fur him."

And then came a rush through the grove, as the wild, drunken ruffians hunted down the in-offensive stranger, and came on him, where he stood in the shadow, by the tree, with his bow bent.

The sight seemed to take them by surprise, for they paused for an instant, and their hands, as by one consent, went to their hips, when the now excited young man cried out:

"Don't do it, gentlemen. I am one, and you are a dozen; but the first man that fires will be killed."

And as they saw that he had the bow drawn, with an arrow fitted to the string, the foremost of the ruffians said, with an attempt at rough jocularly:

"Why, what in blazes is the matter with ye, anyway? We don't want'er hurt ye. It's the custom of the boys in this hyar camp to pay thar footin' the night they comes in, and you ain't to be the fu'st breaks the rule."

The young stranger, seeing that the fighting spirit was growing less, answered in the most innocent way in the world:

"You will please excuse me, gentlemen, but what is it that you mean by paying one's footing? I am a stranger, and do not wish to break the custom of the camp. What is the footing?"

His simple and very polite address had its effect on them, for the leader said:

"Oh, waal, ef you're green, thar ain't no harm did. It means that the boys want to drink, and they'll think you're darned mean, ef ye don't treat."

Louis put his bow aside, to answer:

"Gentlemen, if you want me to pay for your whisky, and have no money of your own—"

He was interrupted by a chorus of groans.

"Hyar the snoozer! Oh, blazes, what a mean cuss!"

One man stalked up to him, demanding:

"What d'ye mean by that, snoozer? We've got the dust to buy you a dozen times; but we ain't that mean we don't spend it. Darn you and your money, too, ye or'nary, mean, sneakin', pusillanimous, cock-eyed, snub-nosed, knock-kneed, shamblin', lop-sided son of a Injun squaw. I kin whip the hull face off ye, any way ye like to hev it, and then spit on ye for fun. D'ye hyar?"

"I hear," was the unmoved reply of the young man.

"Then come and take a drink, ye or'nary snoozer, or, by gum, me and you's got to fight."

As he spoke he laid his hand, or rather tried to lay it, on the young man, when Louis evaded the grasp and started back, saying:

"Thank you, sir; but I never drink anything but water and coffee."

"The blazes ye don't!" echoed the other, as if the story was beyond credibility. "Then what in blazes brought ye hyar, snoozer?"

"To earn some money to keep my mother in her old age," was the simple reply.

The reply had a strange effect on more than one there; for there is something in the name of a mother that finds its response in the hardest heart.

But, as in every company there is found some ruffian worse than his peers, so it was in this one. The man who had been doing most of the talking was silent, but another said, with a bitter sneer:

"Oh, to blazes with yer pious talk. Ye've got to pay for the drinks or fight."

"But I don't want to do either, gentlemen," the young man protested, backing away from them; and the reply produced an immediate outburst.

Out came the revolvers, and the man who had first spoken shouted:

"Skeer the darned snoozer aout of his life. Hyar goes fur his hat."

And the next minute a perfect hail of shots came whistling round the ears of the young stranger, who stood there, knowing that if he resisted he would be instantly murdered.

His hat was knocked off his head, and the reckless miners sent the bullets through his shirt, grazing the skin in more than one place, while several men fired into the ground at his feet, knocking the dirt into his face.

But the ordeal did not last long, for each man had only six shots, and fired them off as fast as he could, in less than twenty seconds.

They seemed an hour to the man who was being bedeviled, but he stood like a statue.

When the last shot had been fired and the ruffians stood there staring at him, amazed at his coolness, for one moment silenced in spite of themselves, he asked in a voice that did not tremble a particle:

"Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied? If you will tell me how much the whisky costs, I will tell you whether I can afford to pay for it."

The words were so different to what they had expected that a slight ripple of laughter went through the crowd, and one man said:

"Waal, he is a cool shaver, arter all. 'Tain't wuth while to give him no more, boys. Let's go somewhar else."

And the speaker sauntered off, followed after an interval first by one then another of the men who had come there to torment the stranger, till but one remained. This was the man who had told him he must "drink or fight," a stout, sturdy, hard-featured fellow, with a bushy beard, which he pulled nervously, as he said:

"That's all very well, my duck; but ef you think you're a-goin' to git off like that, you don't know Brimstone Jack. That's me, and they call me that, 'cause I'm all blazes in a fight. Hand over what dust ye hev, or it'll be the wuss fur ye."

The young stranger looked at the men who were walking away, and then at Brimstone Jack.

"I have not got any dust, sir," he said, civilly; "I have only just come here."

"Come hyar, be blowed! Hand over yer money, or I'll bore a hole through ye so quick ye won't know what hit ye."

And Brimstone Jack cocked his pistol, forgetting that he had fired off the last charge.

The young stranger faced him, and said:

"Shoot away! If you kill me, you're a coward."

Brimstone Jack laughed.

"I'll take that easy enough, as long as I git the dust from ye. Take that!"

And he pulled the trigger, the pistol pointed straight at the young man's breast.

The click of the hammer was heard, and in the same instant Louis Badeau leaped forward and grappled with the square-built ruffian.

How he did it, Brimstone Jack never knew, as he afterward declared, but the next minute his heels were in the air, and he fell on his back with a thud, his head striking a rock as he fell, when he lay perfectly still, and the young stranger calmly took possession of the pistol and belt, which he transferred to his own waist and muttered:

"I think that will settle you."

There had been no noise in the struggle, so quickly had the trick been performed, and the men who were sauntering off did not hear it.

Brimstone Jack lay still where he had been thrown, and the light of the moon, just then rising, threw a ghastly white over his face as he lay, making him look as if he were dead.

But Louis Badeau knew better, for he stooped down and felt of the fallen man's heart, when he said to himself aloud:

"He'll live, the scoundrel. But I see one thing plainly: I must get out of this."

Leaving the fallen man where he had been stretched senseless, Louis went to the overthrown tent, and put all his belongings into the wheelbarrow, with as much haste as he could exercise. The insensible man lay quiet while he was doing it, and he had time to get everything into the little vehicle, before Brimstone Jack woke up and began to groan.

Then Louis saw him feel for his pistol, and the young man smiled to himself as he took the barrow and trundled it away.

He made as little noise as he could, and kept on the soft grass by the side of the stream; so that he was enabled to get out of the vicinity of the settlement without attracting any attention and went up the course of the stream, when he found himself, within a few minutes, in as complete solitude as if the wilderness reigned there. A grove of trees, of which the place he lately occupied had been the first indication, stretched along the course of the stream, which grew narrower and narrower as he got nearer to its source.

He went on till the sounds of the drunken singing in the camp had entirely died away; the stream itself having sunk to a mere thread of water, glistening in the moonlight. As he advanced, the rocks at the side of the valley came closer together, and the great mountain overhead advanced to meet him, till he rested at last under an almost perpendicular precipice, and said to himself: "Here is the place for my camp."

For the purpose of defense, in case of a repetition of the ruffianly attack he had just experienced, the position was an admirable one.

The mountain came down at this point, in a succession of steps, down which the stream, that filled the valley below, fell in several cascades. Other streams came trickling down from the other side of the valley, which could hardly be called other than a ravine at this point, to join the main rivulet.

The lowest of the steps in the mountain-side was barely accessible, but Louis could see a broad ledge above, where the stream made a pool before leaping over the edge of the precipice,

and thought there was room on the ledge for the erection of a tent.

To get there, he had to unload his barrow and climb the bank alone, taking his belongings with him, piecemeal; but at last the task was accomplished, and Louis Badeau gazed into the valley below, and saw that he was perfectly safe from the attack of anything less than a regiment.

The ledge on which he had taken his stand was broad enough to conceal his tent from view in the valley, even if any one came that way, which was not likely; and he had ample room to make a comfortable habitation, with the rock for a shelter behind him, and the ability to beat off any number of foes that might try to climb the bank.

Then he laid himself down to rest, without the precaution of setting up the tent at all, and soon was wrapped in the slumber that follows on a hard day's journey.

He did not wake till the light of dawn entered the valley.

His first glance, as he opened his eyes, fell on the top of the mountain opposite, where the snow never melted; and the rosy rays of morning were lingering on the summit, with a beauty that was inexpressibly comforting to the young man. All alone there, on the mountain-side, with the hum of the distant settlement not yet audible, Louis Badeau realized what it was to be in communion with nature.

He rose and looked round him. The first thing he saw was a flock of beautiful-crested quail in the valley below him, huddled together as they had passed the night. To get his bow and send an arrow into the midst of the flock was the work of a moment to the active young man, who had great skill with the weapon. The distance was just enough to give the arrow its proper range, and the first shaft laid low the leader of the flock.

The rest seemed to be stupefied by the occurrence, for they did not run, but stood staring at the transfixed bird, and Louis had an opportunity to slay two more, before the birds seemed to realize where their enemy was. Then he descended the precipice; picked up the birds, and prepared for his first breakfast in the Dog-Town valley.

CHAPTER III.

DIGGER JIM.

THERE was something in the air and weapons of this solitary young stranger, that had made one of his assailants the night before take him for an Indian and call him so. His skill with the bow—a weapon so seldom used by white men in these days—gave a good deal of color to the supposition.

As he climbed up the rocks to his eyrie, when he had picked up the birds, there was a lightness and activity in all his motions that reminded one of an Indian, and when he had regained the place where he had made his habitation, he proceeded to cook his birds, Indian fashion, over a fire, which he lighted at the foot of the rock by the waterfall.

He had finished his meal, and the faint smoke of the little fire was almost lost in the spray of the waterfall which splashed beside him, when he heard the sound of voices in the ravine at the foot of the precipice, and immediately threw himself flat on the ground, as an Indian might have done, crawling off like a snake to the edge, to look into the valley.

He took all the precautions an Indian would have taken, even to hiding his head in a tuft of grass as he peeped over, and the sight he saw convinced him that he had been right in taking his flight the evening before.

There, in the vale below him, were gathered ten or twelve of the toughest specimens of humanity he had ever seen in all his life; and now that the light of day was upon them, they looked even more repulsive than they had the night before.

Brimstone Jack was at the head of them, and all were heavily armed with rifles and pistols. They were peering about in the valley, as if trying to track something, and a smile crossed the face of the young man above as he said to himself:

"Great trackers, those."

They seemed to be puzzled what to do, and he heard their voices coming up the face of the precipice:

"Whar in blazes did the skunk go to, anyway?"

"Reckon he must hev flowed off, like a bird."

They seemed to have been puzzled by finding the track of the wheelbarrow ceasing, where he had stopped it at the foot of the precipice.

He had taken his goods from the spot on purpose to puzzle them, jumping from rock to rock and leaving no trail behind him, when he had hauled his belongings up the rock. The track of the single wheel ended in a direction which gave no clew to where he had gone and they seemed to be quite puzzled to know what to do. At last he heard one of them say:

"No use huntin' the skunk naow, boys. Got to git one of them Piutes to trail. He'll hunt him up darned sudden. And when we git him we'll fix him for stealin' Brimstone Jack's weepins."

Then they turned round and went off down

the valley, and Louis Badeau realized that he had made enemies of a gang of bad men, and that they were going to get an Indian trailer to hunt him down.

To say that the idea did not disquiet him would be untrue; for this young man had been brought up among Indians and knew the marvelous powers of the savages in trailing. He felt decidedly uneasy, and as the last man turned the corner of the rocks on his way down the valley, Louis drew a sigh of relief.

Then he began to inspect the ledge on which he had taken refuge with a view to finding a way to escape if he should be pressed too hard. There was one way by which he could ascend the face of the rocks above him; but to do so he would be exposed to the fire of any one in the valley and he did not fancy that.

But under the rocks where the water had been dripping and falling for centuries perhaps, a sort of cave had been worn out, and he saw that he could easily defend the place against any one who should come to attack him, though they might blockade him and end by starving him to death.

He had placed his baggage there when he first went in, for the sake of shelter from the spray of the waterfall, and now he set to work to make the place into a commodious habitation, which he accomplished in a short time, his needs being simple.

Then, for the first time he began to look about him, with a view of finding out what was the character of the place where he found himself. The ledge being about a hundred feet broad, the pool which the falling water had formed was in the center about five feet deep.

The constant attrition of the waterfall had hollowed out the basin in the solid rock, and had partially filled it with fragments of sand and earth, washed down from above, which, as the water of the pool was clear he could see as he looked into its depths.

The center of this pool was nearly black, as if the earth that had settled there was of the rich character of forest loam, but this he could not believe; for the summits of the mountains round him were bare of trees, and the stream could come from nothing but the snow-banks, far away above, and it ran over naked rock, all the way to the cascade.

He peered long and earnestly into the stream, and seemed to be thinking deeply over something, for the words presently escaped from his lips:

"It may be. Who knows?"

What was the subject of his thoughts was uncertain, for he gave no more audible expression to them than this, when his quick ear was attracted by a sound in the valley below, and he threw himself down again, as he had done before, and crept to the edge of the ledge to look over.

There he saw, coming from the upper end of the valley, a man dressed in fantastic rags, a high hat set on his head, with several feathers stuck into the side, an old uniform coat on his back, bare legs below, a stick in his hand, with which he was poking about in the dirt, as if in search of something.

Louis knew the figure in a moment, as that of one of the vagabond Indians that roamed in the neighborhood of the mines, all over the West, for what they could pick up—drunken, good-for-nothing creatures, too degraded to feel, or at least to show, any shame at the abuse heaped on them by the rough miners, but always ready to pick up an honest penny by doing any sort of dirty work.

The Indian had kept his eyes on the ground till Louis saw him; when he came on the trail of the miners who had been there; stopped a little while, and then began to trail, in the habit of his race, as if he could not resist the temptation, till he had traced out the feet of the men and the track of the single wheel, to the rock where the young man had unloaded the barrow, the night before.

Then he seemed to be puzzled for a little; but finally, as Louis had foreseen he would, traced the almost invisible track, where the young man had leaped from rock to rock, and cast his eyes up to the very spot where Louis was hiding.

The young stranger saw that he was discovered and knew it was no use to hide; and at once rose and made a sign which the Indian below understood as an invitation to come up and have a talk in peace.

The Indian hesitated a moment as if he feared to come; but when Louis repeated the signal more earnestly, he nodded his head and began to climb.

A few minutes later he stood beside the young man; extended his hand, and said something in a strange tongue, which Louis did not understand.

The young man shook his head, and made answer in the tongue of another Indian tribe, which the wanderer evidently did not understand, for he made a gesture of impatience, and began to talk the sign language which Louis had employed, and which is common to all Indians.

They withdrew from the edge of the bank, in obedience to Louis's signal, and opened an ani-

mated conversation, in perfect silence, using their hands, arms and eyes, in a manner very similar to deaf mutes.

That they understood each other was evident from the first, and the only audible words they spoke were when Louis asked the other his name, and the Indian replied in broken English:

"Me call Digger Jim. White man say dat."
"Do you understand English then?" asked Louis.

Digger Jim nodded vehemently, asking in turn:

"You talk white man too? Bully for you! Heap good! Ugh!"

Then Louis could hardly help laughing at the face of the Indian as he added:

"Me tink you Injun, samee me. Vot you be? Ugh?"

The young man spoke slowly, for he saw that the English on which the Indian prided himself so much was very imperfect, as he said:

"I am not an Indian, Jim; but I was brought up in a place where there are a good many of them, in Canada, and my father lived among them, and they taught me to use the bow, as they do."

"Vat you call?" interrupted Jim.

"My name is Louis Badeau; but the Indians called me Flying Arrow," was the reply. "How do you like that name, Jim?"

Jim smiled, with an expression of great gratification, as he said:

"Good name. Digger Jim shoot too. Vot you do, here?"

"Come to dig for gold, Jim."

Digger Jim cast a keen suspicious glance on the young man, and appeared to be hesitating for a word, but finally said:

"Digger Jim don't like men dig for gold. Come kill game, frighten Injun, take Injun gal. Get drunk, hit Jim. Don't like man dig for gold."

"Can't help that, Jim. I am not like the rest; but that is what I came for. The men in the camp below hunted me up here, and if they catch me they will try to kill me."

Jim looked as if the intelligence altered his mind, and he said slowly:

"Why catchee you? What you do?"

"Knocked one of their men down, and took his pistol," was the reply, as Louis showed the Indian the captured weapon.

Digger Jim's eyes flashed with fun, as he said in a hearty tone:

"Bully! Bully! Good man!"

Then he seemed to be struggling with himself for a little, and at last he asked:

"How much gold you want?"

Louis, surprised at the question, replied:

"I'm sure I don't know, Jim. I suppose as much as I can get."

Jim pointed to the pool, with the dry remark:

"Look dere. Man below fool. Don't know gold when see it. Gold here, and oder place. Me show you, 'cause you talk Injun. Good."

Louis hardly knew whether he meant what he said; but the Indian satisfied him by continuing:

"All right, all right. Me show you. Digger Jim get drunk, Dog-Town, but he know—he know."

Then he put his head on one side, as if listening, and asked:

"Who come here? Mans arter you?"

Louis, whose senses had been trained among the Canadian Indians till they were nearly as keen as those of the Digger, nodded.

"It must be the men, Jim; and they are after you, to help them trail me. What are we to do?"

Jim considered a moment, and then said rapidly:

"You stay here. Me go down. Digger Jim no fool. Me fool 'em. Dey got Whisky Charley. Me know him. Me tell him what to do."

So saying, he slipped off the edge of the ledge, and went down the steep descent, with the agility of a goat, till he reached the valley, when he began to wander to and fro, as Louis had seen him, when he first spied him from the top of the rock.

Badeau lay watching, hidden from view, and soon heard the voices of men coming again.

A little later, a group of miners entered the gorge below, headed by another Indian, the very counterpart, in rags and general dilapidation of appearance, to Digger Jim; and this Indian was trailing the track of the wheelbarrow.

Louis saw Digger Jim go up to his friend.

CHAPTER IV.

WHISKY CHARLEY.

THE young man saw Digger Jim and the other Indian hold an animated conversation, while the white men watched them impatiently.

They chattered and talked to each other and did nothing, till one of the white men called out to them angrily:

"What'n blazes ails ye, ye darned niggers! Git up and do yer trackin'. Whar's the darned skunk gone ter?"

Louis listened attentively and heard the Indian who was with them say, in his broken English:

"Gone up valley. Up—up high. Take snow."

And he pointed up the ravine where another part of the stream came down, as if indicating the path taken by the fugitive.

The news seemed to produce a revulsion of feeling among the miners; for one of them said in an impatient way:

"Oh, darn the skunk. He ain't wu'th huntin' fur, as fur as that, nohow. Let's go back, boys. If he's gone up to the snow-line, he'll freeze or starve to death, and that's jest as good as ef we ketch him and string him up."

The advice seemed to be consonant with the desires of the men; for more than one turned as if to go back to Dog-Town, when Brimstone Jack cried out, in a complaining way:

"What, boys? Ye ain't goin' back on me; air ye?"

"No, we ain't goin' back on ye, Jack," was the reply of one of the men, in whom Louis recognized the gentleman on the broncho, whom he had met the day before; "but thar ain't no use in aour goin' and stayin' on the maountings, fur a week, huntin' this feller, when you kin do it alone. He's only one man, and you oughter be as good as him, any day in the week. You've got your weepings; and ef you let him git the drop on yer, why, it's yer own fault. Hyar's Digger Jim and Whisky Charley. They kin hunt him up fur ye, ef ye want to git squar' so bad; but it ain't no biz of aourn, naow we know whar he's gone. Jim Barnes ain't the man to go back on nary one of his friends; but by gosh, ef you ain't able fur this man alone, you orter go and hang yourself."

The speech seemed to meet with approval, for there was a murmur of:

"Good, good. That's the talk, boys. We can't waste aour time on it."

And they began to go off, while Louis Badeau, on the rocks above, watched the thing with a good deal of eagerness.

Brimstone Jack seemed to be much depressed in spirits, for his voice had lost the aggressive tone it usually wore, as he cried:

"Say, boys, that ain't the squar' thing on me; I swar it ain't. Hyar you're leavin' me, all alone, and this darnation skunk mou't hev fifty of the same sort with him. Don't he look like a Injun, and ain't he got his friends in the maountings?"

"And s'pose he has," interrupted Jim Barnes. "Air that any reason we shed go arter him? You call yourself a smart feller, Jack, and say as haow you're all blazes on a fight. Go and take this snoozer, and we'll all say as haow you're right. That's talk; ain't it, boys?"

"Ay, ay," broke in another man. "Take the niggers and hunt him up. He's got nothing but a pistol, you say. Assoon as you see him, jump him, Jack. You ought to be good at jumping. Bring his scalp to camp, and we'll allow you're a real man. So long."

And he, too, turned away; when Jack called after him, in his most aggrieved tones:

"You, Charley Jones, I'll git squar' with you, fur this."

Louis was watching them keenly from above, and he saw that the man addressed was a very small person, with a smooth, boyish face, and long, light, curly hair, arranged in ringlets with the air of a dandy. He was dressed in a manner very different from the rest of the crowd; for he wore a white shirt, ruffled expensively, that had evidently been washed, and put on, clean, that morning, whereas the rest of the men had coarse flannel garments, and were ragged and unkempt.

This little fellow wore a black velvet jacket and white trousers, and it had been puzzling Louis, ever since he set eyes on him, how he could manage to look so neat, in the vicinity of Dog-Town. He seemed, also, to be the only man in the crowd who was unarmed, and he had his hands in the pockets of his velvet coat, in a careless way, as if he were bent on nothing but lounging to look on.

But Louis also noticed that, the moment the bully of the camp called out a threat, the little man wheeled round; while, even from where Louis was concealed, he could see that Brimstone Jack turned pale.

The man who had been called Charley Jones immediately walked back to Jack, and spoke to him in a calm, deliberate way, with a clear enunciation that was very different from the thick talk of the rest of the miners.

"Look here, Mr. Boggs," he said, "you did me the honor to make a remark. What was it?"

And Louis, looking from above could see that Brimstone Jack was confused.

"I didn't say nothin'," he answered, in a tone very different from that he had just used, and with something very like a whine.

The little man laughed carelessly.

"Oh, well, if you don't dare repeat it, I don't want any difficulty with you. But I would just advise you to keep a civil tongue in your head after this, Mr. Boggs, or you might chance to be sent to glory before your time. That is all. I am sorry you lost your pistol last night, but it seems to me that the man who took it from you

was a better man than you. Now go and get him, if you think I'm wrong."

And, without deigning any further words, or even looking behind him, the little man sauntered off down the valley, while the rest of the miners followed him, leaving Brimstone Jack alone in his glory with the two Indians.

Then Louis heard the man below him swearing with a virulence and ardor that he had never heard excelled in his life.

The Indians stood staring at him with immovable faces, and when he had quite exhausted his fury he turned to them and shouted:

"Go ahead and trail, you darnation fools. What do you suppose you came hyar fur?"

Whisky Charley held out his hand in the most innocent way in the world, remarking:

"Givee dust. Injun want see dust. Ugh!"

Brimstone Jack started back, as if astounded at the insolence of the demand, and roared:

"Go ahead and trail, or I'll take the hide off ye both, ye darned niggers!"

In a moment both Indians—they had stepped up as close to him as they could just before—sprung on the bully, and entwined their arms round his neck.

Then came a short, desperate struggle, in which Louis could only see a confusion of writhing bodies, rolling about on the grass.

It lasted about a minute and a half, and then he saw Digger Jim raise a pistol, which he had snatched from the belt of Brimstone Jack, and deal him several heavy blows on the head, when the bully instantly ceased to struggle, and lay still, after a single yell at the top of his voice.

Louis, above, not knowing exactly what they would do to the man he thought they had stunned, was about to rise up, when he saw both the Indians rise from the struggle and begin to laugh to each other and talk excitedly in their own language, while they pointed to the fallen man.

Then they began to make signals to the man on the top of the rock in the sign language, for he understood what they meant, though they did not look his way.

From their pantomime he made out that they both knew he was there, and that they were his friends. That they would take the weapons of the fallen man and leave them at a place which they would mark for him by two sticks pointing to where they would be hidden, and that he was to follow and take possession of the weapons. For themselves, they would have to run away to their own band, till the affair had blown over, for it would not be safe for them to be seen around the white man's home for some time. Then they took the weapons of the man they had knocked down so cleverly, and went off up the ravine, while Louis watched Brimstone Jack, for about ten minutes afterward.

A man untrained in Indian wiles would have gone down to examine the body at once; but Louis had noticed that Jack uttered a yell before he went down, and he believed that the bully was shamming insensibility to escape death.

That he was right in his supposition became evident in about a quarter of an hour, during which Brimstone Jack lay perfectly still.

Then he suddenly raised his head, looked cautiously round, and dropped it again, as if he feared some one was looking.

A second time he raised it; and then, seeming to be satisfied, sat up, rubbed his head ruefully, and stared all round him. He was alone and entirely unarmed, and Louis could hardly help laughing at the figure he cut.

Finally the terrible fighter, who had taken such a tone to him the night before, rose slowly to his feet and went off down the valley toward the camp till he turned the corner, when he disappeared, and Louis laughed to himself to think that he had ever been afraid of such a man in all his life.

He had not settled in his own mind his safest course, and might have been in a state of doubt for some time longer, when his attention was attracted by the cry of an owl, from the direction in which the two Indians had gone. He knew well enough that the cry was artificial, for owls never cry in daytime, and he rightly thought that the signal was meant for himself. The two Indians wanted to see him, and yet he hesitated a little about descending from his safe eyrie, before he knew that the coast was clear.

He was still hesitating what to do, when the call was repeated with greater urgency, and he saw the form of Digger Jim come into sight, around a corner of the ravine, and make him the sign of haste.

That settled the question for him, and he made no further scruples about descending the face of the precipice, which he accomplished much faster than when he had ascended it.

The two Indians had disappeared; but he ran on to where he had seen Jim last, and when he turned the corner of the rock, saw both of them. He had taken along only the Indian bow, which he had brought with him from his native place, and the revolver he had taken from Brimstone Jack the night before.

The Indians waited till he was in sight, and then turned, without a word, and went off up the ravine till they came to a place where there was another waterfall.

Up the side of this place they scrambled, and he followed them till they had led him a mile or more above the waterfall, and he had become almost lost in a maze of valleys and ravines. At last Jim halted, and he came up with them in a solitary glen, where it seemed as if no white man's foot could ever have trod.

There Digger Jim held out his hand, and said:

"Goot, goot! Injun glad—heap glad—see you. Dis Whisky Charley. Goot man! Ugh!"

Then he began to talk with his hands, and Charley followed him, so that the conversation became interesting.

They seemed to find the sign-language easier for the comprehension of all parties than the broken English, which was all they possessed, common to both parties; and Whisky Charley seemed to have less English than his friend, for he did not venture on a single word in that tongue.

But they managed to communicate to the young stranger that they were his friends, and that their tribe lived in the mountains, about two days' journey away. They told him, by their signs, that if ever he needed their help, he was at liberty to flee to their tribe, and they would help him.

Then Whisky Charley, with a good deal of solemnity, handed him the rifle, which he had taken from the terrible Brimstone Jack, with a pair of revolvers with which that doughty warrior had armed himself, remarking, in the first English words he had used:

"Heap goot! Take um! Shoot! Good! Ugh!"

CHAPTER V.

THE ANGEL TURNS UP.

LOUIS BADEAU regarded the arms, that had fallen to his share in so unexpected a way, with a great deal of interest. They consisted of a rifle of handsome make, of the Sharpe variety, and a pair of Colt's revolvers of the largest belt-size, the whole mounted with silver, and having the stocks engraved, on silver plates, with the initials, C. J.

These initials puzzled him, for they showed that the weapons could not belong to the man known as Brimstone Jack, whom he had heard called Boggs, by the little dandified man, who had taken the bully down so suddenly.

His reflections on the point were cut off by the Indians, who now came to bid him farewell, and who recommended him to leave the place where he had made up his camp at the foot of the waterfall; for they assured him that it would not be safe for him to stay there alone, as the miners would be sure to discover him, sooner or later, and then he would be hurt.

They offered, if he wished, to show him a place where he would be safe from discovery, and Digger Jim told him that there was gold enough there to make him as rich as he wanted, in a very short time.

The intelligence excited Louis somewhat, but he controlled the feeling, and followed the two Indians, who seemed to have taken a great fancy to him, since they found he was connected with them, even by the remote tie of the sign language, till they had traversed two more valleys, when they showed him a pool of water in the midst of a ravine, which they assured him he would find better worth his search than any of the diggings at Dog-Town.

Then they hastily left him. The last he saw of them, they were disappearing behind the rocks which encircled the ravine, and in a little while had vanished.

Then Louis set himself to examining the vale in which he had been set down, and found that the prediction of the Indians had been true; for, inside of the first five minutes' search, he was rewarded by fishing out of the dark mud, at the border of the pool, a nugget, which even his unpracticed eye recognized as virgin gold, of a weight of nearly a pound, and the promise of more when he should wish to seek it.

He determined to take their advice and make his home in that ravine; but, to do so, it was necessary for him to go back to the place where he had left his baggage, and bring it to the ravine with as little trail behind him as might be.

The problem of living in this desolate ravine did not trouble him much; for he saw that game was plenty in the mountains, away from the diggings, and his bow would furnish him with food without disturbing the neighborhood.

He belted the rifle at his back, and set off on his return trip to the waterfall, where he arrived in due time, without seeing anybody to disturb him.

To pack up his belongings in the barrow and let the vehicle down to the valley below with a rope which he had in the rest of the baggage, was easy; but when it came to hiding the trail of the wheel, the matter was not so easy. Finally he waded into the stream which ran toward Dog-Town, and took the barrow up its course, so that the water might hide the trail, as far as possible.

He succeeded in getting away from the valley without discovery, and was congratulating himself on having made his escape, when he looked

back and beheld the figure of a man coming up the ravine on foot, just turning the corner of a rock, and knew that he was seen.

He hesitated no longer, but dashed round the corner of the rocks, and then paused and prepared to defend himself.

He was well fortified, and no one could get at him from the rear, so that he felt comparatively easy, but he suddenly remembered that he had never fired a rifle in his life, and that with the pistol he was equally deficient, though he had an idea how the thing was done, and had fully intended that he would practice with the weapons in the solitude of the hills, till he should become a proficient.

From where he had taken his stand, he could see the person who was coming up the ravine, and it comforted him not a little to see that he was alone.

But as the other came nearer, he was rather surprised to find that it was the identical individual who had been addressed as "Charley Jones," and that the little man was sauntering along, with his hands in his pockets, as coolly as if he owned the whole valley.

Curiosity, and something very like interest held him where he was for some time, while the small stranger came along, picking his way over the stones as if he feared to wet his feet, till he came within hailing distance of Louis, without raising his eyes, as if he had not seen him.

Then the little man suddenly stopped, and spoke in a quiet tone of voice.

"Look here, my friend, this is all very well for a joke; but if you know when you are well off, you'll come from behind that barrow of yours. They call me The Angel of Dog-Town, from my sweetness of temper; but if you think I'm going to have a man glowering at me in that way, and not have a word to say, you are mistaken."

There was something in the address of the little man that was so different from the rough slang of the miners, that Louis, who did not understand what he meant, came out, having no fear of an unarmed man of such small stature, and said politely:

"My dear sir, I had no intention of offending you; but after the way your friends treated me last night, you must allow I have cause to be a little suspicious of strangers."

The little man eyed him narrowly from head to foot, while he was speaking; and when the other had finished, he remarked:

"Well, sir, I can't say but what you are right; but, all the same, you've got my weapons with you, and I'll trouble you to hand them over."

Louis stared at him.

"Your weapons?"

"Ex-act-ly, sir—my weapons. A Sharpe's rifle, and a pair of belt-pistols, marked C. J. That's my handle, Charley Jones, the Angel, so called from my sweetness of temper. I was fool enough to lend them to that idiot of a Brimstone Jack; and he came into camp and told me that the two niggers had stolen them. Now I am, as I have remarked, a man of sweet temper; but I don't like to have niggers going round, wearing my weapons, and as they probably gave them to you, or you wiped them out to get them, the sooner you hand them over, the better I shall like it."

Louis hesitated.

"You say these are your weapons, sir. I am sure I don't want to keep them; but what guarantee have I that you may not use them against me, the next minute?"

The little stranger burst out laughing, as if the question tickled him immensely.

"Well, that is a good one. Why, my good, green, tender baby, don't you know that I've got you in a hole now, and that if I choose to crook my finger, I could lay you out, and you never know what hurt you?"

Louis looked puzzled.

"I must confess I don't know it," he said, stiffly.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when there was a flash from the side of the little man, whose hands were in his pockets, and Louis Badeau's hat flew off his head, when the other called out, in a quick menacing way:

"Now keep still, or you'll get hurt. I've got another derringer cocked, and if you turn cantankerous, I'll take the top of your head off, next time. You see you've waked up the wrong man, when you go fooling round Charley Jones. I've got the sweetest temper in the world; but when a man undertakes to come such talk as that, you know, the sweetest temper may be ruffled."

Louis Badeau stared at him and realized that this little man, with all his dandified ways, was a wicked marksman, and probably a gambler and desperado, or he would not have cowed Brimstone Jack, in the way he had.

With the best grace he could, he took off the rifle and pistols which he had just acquired, and said, with an air of resignation:

"I suppose you have what they call—"

"The drop on you—exactly," was the smiling reply, "and you've done the best thing you could have done, my good friend. You are a pretty good fellow from your looks, or I might have been harder on you, but I hate to take ad-

vantage of a greenhorn like you. How did you get that other pistol from Jack?"

"Took it from him, after I had knocked him down," was Louis's rather proud reply, "and you would not have taken me as easily as you did, if I had had any notion you were an enemy."

The Angel laughed good-temperedly, as he said:

"That's all right, sir. I'm not an enemy of yours, or I should have killed you, instead of taking off your hat. Much obliged to you for those things. I only wanted them for the principle of the thing, you know. If you have any use for them, and would like to borrow them for a while, I shall be very happy to let you have them. I suppose you know how to use them."

Louis was so taken aback at this unexpected address that he colored very red, and answered:

"To tell the truth, sir, I never shot with any thing but a bow and arrows, but if you would be so kind—"

"Say no more," interrupted the singular little man. "The things are yours. Why, Lord bless your soul, man, I don't want 'em. I only lent 'em to that fool of a Jack, because I had more than I needed, and he begged, like a dog. Keep 'em as long as you want, and—by the by, have you any ammunition?"

"No, sir, I have not, save what there may be in the pouch," said Louis completely disarmed.

The Angel laughed again.

"I thought not. Greenhorn is written in every line of that face of yours. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bring some ammunition here to-morrow night and leave it—well, say behind that rock. The boys seem to be down on you because you are a stranger, and it wouldn't do for you to go into the village yet, but you go to work and practice, and when you know how to shoot straight come down and you'll find me there, too. If they try any tricks on you, just you give 'em the first shot every time, till they leave you alone. So long."

And away sauntered the little stranger, leaving Louis in a state of surprise bordering on stupor, but convinced that the little man was the most wonderful person he had ever met.

He watched The Angel till he disappeared and then took his barrow and went off up the ravines.

In due time he arrived at the place where the Indians had told him to make his camp, and set up his tent.

Then, in the solitary glen of the mountains, he began to search for gold, and in the space of the first afternoon he had laid on the ground a little heap of nuggets, so heavy that he was convinced that he had at least a thousand dollars' worth in the pile.

After that his luck was bad, for he found no more that day, and by nightfall was beginning to feel discouraged, in spite of his early success. He was not the first who had found that surface-washings, while they seem rich at first, are not always to be depended on to last.

That night he slept quietly, and the next morning he was up by dawn, and on his way to the place where the benevolent little gambler had told him he would leave him the ammunition.

True to the promise of The Angel, there was a packet behind the rock, where he was told to look, and on the top of the packet lay a note, which read thus:

"You're a good fellow, and I don't want to have you hurt. The boys are down on you, and swear they'll hunt you down for consorting with Indians. Keep dark till you have learned to shoot."

"When you can take a dime every time for a dollar a bet, come into Dog-Town."

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES JONES,

(Alias The Angel of Dog-Town.)

"P. S.—Look out for Juanita. She's the Queen of the Camp, and likes nothing better than to bleed a greenhorn."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MINERS' SABBATH.

SUNDAY at Dog-Town was always a feast-day, in the regular mining style.

If the Spanish element in the wild West has done nothing else for the Anglo-Saxons, it has given them a Spanish Sunday, when every man does as he pleases.

In the towns where there are churches, the women and a small sprinkling of men go to mass in the morning, but, the duties of the day once performed—no matter by how few—the rest of the time is given to a miner's idea of enjoyment.

There being no churches in Dog-Town, the first part of the "Frisco" programme was left out by universal consent; but the rest of the regular routine of the day was faithfully observed, as far as cock-fighting and other national sports were concerned.

Dog-Town on a Sunday was generally "painted red" by the miners, before the sun had set, and the only difference between it and the week-days was that no man went to work on his claim, on penalty of being pelted by the rest, who hated to see the day desecrated while there was money to spend at the bar of the Eureka House.

The national game of poker was in full blast

at the hotel, in a room, off the bar, and Jim Barnes was there, with Brimstone Jack and his friends, enjoying a sociable game together, in which the week's store of nuggets and dust was apt to vanish, much faster than it had been accumulated.

Around the table, in the card-room of the Eureka, that day, sat a company of queer characters, with "The Angel" in the center, dealing the cards.

There was little Barney O'Toole, variously nicknamed "Peppery Dan" and "The Lamb;" Jim Barnes, who was christened "The Forty-Niner," though he had never been West till the year 1853; Mr. Joseph Brown, who bore the various cognomens of "Sleepy Joe," "Fulton Market Joe," and "The Tiger"—the last in derision of his general aversion to anything like a fight. Colonel Vandervoort was there, too; with his red face and military air. The colonel had the reputation of having been "a sport" in his day, and a "wonderful fellow among the ladies;" but as these last in Dog-Town were limited to the landlady of the Eureka House, who was fat and forty, with a tongue of which the boldest man in camp stood in awe, and a few Mexicans, who were most conspicuous at the fandangoes, where they were the cause of more homicides than anything else, the colonel had no game on which to waste his ammunition, and was content to take it out in story-telling, to the boys, of the conquests he had made in the past, while he absorbed his whisky with the rest and played a pretty safe hand at poker.

At the head of the table, betting with a recklessness shown by no man in the crowd, sat a woman of very remarkable appearance, to whom all rendered obeisance, in a manner strange to see.

She was attired in a semi-masculine costume, with short skirts; a belt round her slender waist which held a pair of revolvers, expensively mounted, the butts thrust forward in a way that suggested the wearer was ready to use them at a moment's notice.

Her face was very handsome, with a hard, defiant expression thereon, as if the owner were at war with all mankind, which was the case; and it was noticeable that no man at the table ventured on the slightest familiarity with her, but treated her exactly as if she had been a man, though with not half the rough talk which they used to each other.

Opposite her sat a large man with a German face, heavy and stolid; though the keen glance of the gray eyes contradicted the sleepy look of the countenance. This was Chris Kapp, who was well known throughout that part of the mining country as the "heaviest grub-staker in the diggin's." He did not dig himself, being too fat for the exercise, but he supplied prospecting-parties and took a share in the profits of their ventures, indemnifying himself for the risk by a heavy percentage of the receipts, and taking interest at twelve per cent. on the money advanced for the outfits.

Such were the characters round the table; and the game had become so heavy that the imperturbable "Angel," Chris Kapp, and the handsome woman who went by the name of Juanita, "Queen of the Camp," were the only persons in the deal, at the moment the rest threw up their hands.

Brimstone Jack, who was an inveterate gambler and seldom lucky, had just exclaimed:

"Consarn the luck; I never went into a pot but the darned thing went back on me."

The Angel smiled as he placidly laid his hand on the table, face down, remarking:

"Then, if I were you, Jack, I'd keep out of it. It isn't every man that can afford to play poker."

Jack colored angrily.

"I kin afford to play as well as any man. All I want is the keards."

Juanita uttered an impatient laugh.

"Any fool can do that. Come, gentlemen, what are you going to do?"

Chris Kapp laid down his hand.

"I goes a t'ousand dollars. Who see dat?"

There was a long-drawn breath in the crowd; for Kapp was known as a cautious gambler, and the bet he made showed he had a good hand.

Juanita laughed and answered:

"I see it and raise it another thousand. What do you do, Angel?"

The Angel, without a word, placed a bag on the table, equal in size to that staked by the woman, and then pushed another of the same size by its side, with a nod to Kapp.

The German took up his cards amid a dead silence, looked at them carefully, and then said, with a slight sigh:

"I vos out."

The woman turned her defiant face toward Charley Jones:

"Well, are you scared yet?"

Charley said not a word, but pointed to the bags on the table, and Juanita, with a sneer on her curling lip, pushed a bag of the same size beside them.

"There," she said, defiantly. "That is the last of my pile, and I don't care who knows it. If I had more, I'd back you down, Charley

Jones; but as it is, I see you. What have you got?"

Charley showed his hand on the table.

"Ace high," he remarked, placidly.

The German, who had gone out, uttered a sonorous oath, as he struck his hand on the table.

"Und I had t'ree kings! Mein Gott, vot a sheek!"

Juanita smiled triumphantly, as she showed her hand on the table. It held a pair of deuces, a hand smaller than any one of those that had been thrown up by the fainter-hearted gamblers, but just enough to beat that of Charley Jones, who had been bluffing in the most barefaced way.

As she swept in her winnings, she remarked to Kapp, with a laugh:

"You'd best get a little pack, and go and play in a corner, my friend."

The German flushed slightly, as he retorted:

"You best mind your own pizness. I blay mein game, and ask no advice from you."

He might have said more; but the dark eyes of the woman were on him, and her hand was near her pistols, while little Charley leaned back in his chair, with the cool smile on his face that never left it, watching the two, as if he enjoyed the quarrel, though he said nothing.

Then Charley gathered up the cards and shuffled them again, asking in his smiling way, as he glanced around:

"Well, boys, who's in the next hand?"

Brimstone Jack stared hard at a little pile of greenish lumps and grains beside him, that represented his gains for the week, and said, in a sulky but resigned way:

"I'm in, for one; but I know I'll git beat."

"You never said a truer word, Jack. Who next?"

"I'm in, too," said Juanita; and then the German, with a frown on his face, for he was mortified at the last hand, observed:

"I go in, too. Mein Gott, I vant a shance to git mein monish back; don't I?"

Several others signified their intention of coming in, and the hands were again dealt; till the cards were distributed and the bets made.

This time Brimstone Jack wore a more cheerful face, and the rest of the miners appeared delighted, while The Angel wore a marble mask that showed no sign of what he had, and the woman had a curl on her lip that was equally deceptive.

The bets began, and Charley had the last say, as before. This time he astonished them all by making a bet of three thousand dollars at the first jump, and the offer sent Brimstone Jack out of the game in disgust, while Chris Kapp, with a vicious setting of the lips, said:

"I see dat bet, and I call it. You don't bluff me all de viles; don't it?"

Juanita, after a glance at her hand, laid it down on the table with the remark:

"I'm out, this time."

Kapp turned his face toward Charley, slightly paler than its wont, asking:

"Vell, vat you do? You back out, hey?"

Charley, without a word, pushed three bags to the middle of the table, and then asked Kapp, with a smile:

"Wouldn't you like to raise it a little?"

Kapp shut his lips tight.

"I calls you. I vant to see vat is your game. Vat you got?"

"Well," drawled Charley, "how would four eights suit your book? If that is not enough, say what will be, and I will try to accommodate you."

Chris Kapp turned red.

"You hafn't got no four eights. I got dem meinselluf, and here dey are."

Charley laughed, in his lazy, good-natured way, as the German laid his hand on the table, and he laid down on the opposite side four nines.

"I merely asked what was your opinion of the hand," he said, placidly. "I didn't say I had it. Any other game you can play as well as poker, Mr. Kapp?"

Kapp bit his lips to restrain the oaths that threatened to come out, in spite of himself, and rose from the table, as Charley swept in his winnings.

"I dinks I don't play no more, to-day, boys," he said with a shrug. "I go take a walk. Tag!"

And he went out of the room, followed by a subdued chuckle from the miners, which was checked in an instant, as Charley observed:

"Don't see anything to laugh at, gentlemen. Mr. Kapp staid in, when some other gentlemen didn't."

"Who's in the next hand? Come, Juanita, you had one haul out of me, and you ought to give me my revenge."

But the miners seemed to be scared by the way the cards were running, and the great size of the stakes that were on the table. They all refused to go into the next hand, and it was left to the man and the woman, who sat opposite to each other, as the cards were dealt.

Juanita had an ugly light in her eye, and, as she looked at her hand, said:

"I'm in. Want no cards."

Charley smiled.

"Stand pat! do you? How feminine that is! For my part, I prefer to take a few, just for the sake of what the new cards may turn out to be. I take three. Now, your majesty, I am ready. What do you do?"

"I chip," she said, suiting the action to the word.

The gambler looked at his new cards, and then asked, in his most insinuating tones:

"Nothing better than that? Well, I will chip also, and bet a thousand. I want to give you a chan- to make some money, to-day, Juanita. The last time we played, you were cleaned out."

She curled her lip.

"Money talks. There is your thousand, and I go a thousand better."

And I see that, and go three above it, my lady. Now, what do you do?"

His tone was that of aggravation, for he wanted to put her out of temper, and he knew she had a fierce disposition of her own.

The taunt succeeded, for she instantly put out the whole of the pile she had beside her, with the remark:

"If I had more, I'd not stop. But, as it is, I call."

Charley Jones looked at her in a singular way, as if he felt doubtful of what he was doing, as he made good his bet, and showed his hand, which held a pair of queens and three kings.

"Is that enough?" he asked, in his silkiest tones, as he looked at her.

The face of the woman was a study for a moment.

Rage and despair were painted on it, for the space of a flash of lightning, and then the icy control which she had learned to exercise over every emotion enabled her to say quietly:

"Quite enough. I have a flush; but it is not enough. I'm through for the day."

She pushed the money toward him—all she had—and rose from the table, while the little gambler shrugged his shoulders and turned to a negro, standing behind him, with the air of a waiter.

"Take the stuff to my room, Sol," he said, in a quiet way. "I've got through, unless these gentlemen want any more."

But no one did, and the little man was allowed to rise and saunter from the room in his usual careless style.

He had cleaned out the Queen of the Camp and Chris Kapp, for the time being, and none of the rest dared to tackle him, when he was in the streak of luck that seemed to be on him that day at least.

And yet nobody said he cheated. Not that they would have been afraid, for the men at the table were used to shooting, and all the skill of the little gambler with his weapons would not have prevented an attack, if they had had an idea that he used unfair means to win their money; but there was something about Charley Jones that forbid the idea that he would stoop to cheating, though he was known to be a man who played cards for a living.

There were too many men watching him to let any false dealing escape their eyes, and he had been known to lose heavily more than once in a streak of bad luck.

"No, no; Charley plays a squar' game," was the universal verdict of everybody who knew him, and even Juanita, when she went out of the room, completely broken down financially, did not seem to cherish any animosity against the little gambler.

Then Colonel Vandervoort remarked, from the side of the bar:

"Gentlemen, we are wasting time. What will you have to-day?"

The words were followed by a rush to the bar.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK BEATS THE BARKEEPER.

THE whisky once "set up," the conversation became general, and naturally turned on the game just played, of which the gallant colonel had something to say.

"I tell you, gentlemen," he observed, as he drank up Brimstone Jack's portion, after his own, in a fit of absence, after he had seen that the redoubtable Jack had his back turned, and was engaged in an argument with his next neighbor. "I tell you, gentlemen, Juanita is the nerviest woman I ever met in all my life, and the wonder is that she can lose money in the way she does, when she strikes Charley, and not get mad over it. There isn't a man in camp that dare tackle that little sinner; and he knows it, and bluffs in the most impudent way; but she is up to him every time. You saw how she took his dust once, and if she had had the caution that most men have, she would have kept it; but she won't be bluffed, when a man says he wants his revenge. But I say, boys, what a team those two would make, to run a first-class faro-bank. Hey! The bare idea of the thing sets me wild. I'd like to be engaged by them to—"

"To do what, colonel? Rope in for the bank?"

The question was asked by Jim Barnes, with a coarse grin.

The colonel became freezingly polite.

"Sir, your insinuation is not warranted by

what I was saying. No, I meant to be dealer. That was all. The game of faro, as you are aware, is a square game, with a certain percentage in favor of the bank, and there is no need of ropers-in as you call it. At all events, not in Dog-Town. It would flourish of itself."

Jim Barnes turned out his empty pockets with a laugh, as he said:

"Not this week, cunnel. I'm bu'sted, and hain't got 'nuff to git the drinks fur the crowd, ef old Boggs won't trust me."

"He'll trust any man who's a friend of mine," put in Brimstone Jack, with a lofty air. "Blood is thicker'n water, cunnel; and Tom Boggs is my brother, I'd have you unnerstand. Set 'em up, Bill."

This adjuration was addressed to the barkeeper, whose only reply was a stolid glance at the wall of the saloon on the opposite side, and a tattoo beat on the bar as if he had not heard.

"Slave, hearest thou?" cried Brimstone Jack, in a tragic tone, as he faced the barkeeper. "I said set 'em up, therefore do as I bid thee, or lose thy life."

The barkeeper, a stout man, with a dyed mustache and a heavy jaw, held out his hand:

"Want the dust, Mr. Boggs. Your brother said as how we warn't to trust you, on no consideration. Them was his words—on no consideration."

And Bill, the barkeeper, winked one eye and looked solemnly at the impecunious miner.

Jack ground his teeth, and turned to the rest, with an appealing shrug.

"What d'ye think of that, boys? Did I say blood war thicker'n water? Well, boys, I lied! lied like a thief; and that's talk; ain't it? It ain't no sich thing at all. It's a darned mean thing; and no man in this room don't wanten deny it, ef he don't wanten hev a fight with Brimstone Jack."

Then, turning to the barkeeper, he added with a volley of oaths:

"Hyar, I ain't dead-broke, and don't you think no sich thing. I've got enough left to treat the boys, and don't you furgit it."

"I ain't like to, when I see it," was the unfeeling reply. "Hand over the dust, Mr. Boggs, and you kin hev all the p'izen you want."

With a scowl, which showed that he had not lost a lingering hope that he might yet impose on the barkeeper, Brimstone Jack went into his pockets, and hauled out a very small bag, which he laid on the bar, asking:

"Haow much d'ye think thar is in that?"

The barkeeper weighed it in his hand, with a critical look:

"I shed say abaout five dollars; nary cent more, and thar mou't be less, fur I hain't looked inside, yit."

Brimstone Jack burst into a wild laugh, while the rest of the men, who knew what a braggart he was, stuck their tongues in their cheeks, and winked at each other:

"Hyar the snoozer!" he cried. "Five dollars! When I tuck twenty paounds of stuff aout of one hoel, and that isn't half what me and my pard made in the fu'st day. Thar's a hunner dollars in that 'ar bag, sonny; and don't you furgit it."

The barkeeper weighed the bag again, and was proceeding to untie it, when Brimstone Jack, with an expression of horror, snatched it from him, yelling loudly:

"Look at the galoot, boys! He wants to steal the last grain of dust a feller's got, to ram it inter the coffers of the hard-hearted cuss that calls hisself my brother. Gracious hevings! and has it come to this? Me own brother to let a darned ornary galoot like this steal the hard earnings of a lifetime. No, sir, you ain't gwine to hev no chance at that 'ar bag. Ef you'll take it fur ten dollars, it's yourn but not a cent less."

The barkeeper hesitated for a moment. He knew that the good-for-nothing bummer in the front of the bar was the brother of the proprietor of the place; and although the owner of the house had given orders that his brother was not to be trusted for whisky, he knew that the landlord often gave liberally for his support. Therefore it was with a sigh of reluctant assent that he swept the bag into the recess behind the bar, saying:

"Well, then, what do you want? I'll take the risk, and if it comes out of my wages, I guess you won't hear the last of it fur a time. What is it, gents?"

Thus urged, the crowd stepped up, and nominated, each man, his especial drink; while the barkeeper checked off the number on his fingers, as they spoke; for drinks cost a dollar apiece at the Eureka House, and ten dollars would not go far. In fact, the first round exhausted the sum named by Brimstone Jack, and there was one man left over; but the barkeeper with a sigh, handed over the required potation, and then Jack, with the politest of bows, drank to the company and turned to leave the saloon, while the barkeeper went behind his fortress to examine, for the first time, the bag on which he had trusted the veteran of the mines.

The rest of the miners watched his face curiously, for they suspected, from their knowledge of Jack's habits, and the fact that he had slid out of the saloon, that there was something

wrong. The next moment came a tremendous oath from the now thoroughly enraged Bill, who roared as he shoved the bag over the top of the counter:

"Look at that, gentlemen! Look at that, and tell me ef that's the way to to treat a white man!"

There was a short silence, followed by a yell of laughter, as the miners saw that the bag, over which such a fuss had been made by Brimstone Jack, contained only a few lumps of quartz, and a dozen bullets, instead of the gold-dust that he had promised.

They stamped and roared; shouted with glee, all the while that the barkeeper was getting madder and madder, till at last the "Forty-Niner" remembered himself, and shouted out:

"Gentlemen, this ain't the squar' thing. Bill's b'en imposed on and the best thing he kin do is to set 'em up ag'in fur me."

The order mollified the barkeeper, who was a model of his kind; and he soon recovered his equanimity, as the fresh drinks were called for by a man whom he knew to be capable of paying for them.

While they were being absorbed, the face of Brimstone Jack made its appearance at the door, and the impudent fellow asked, in a voice of polite inquiry:

"Did ye find the bag all right, Bill?"

Bill, with a savage curse, leaned down behind the bar and snatched up his revolver, but Jack was too quick for him, for he took his head out of range with marvelous celerity, and Jim Barnes said soothingly:

"Don't git yer mad up, Bill. No one don't mind that ornary cuss. He ain't wuth notice."

Bill controlled his feelings with an effort, as he growled:

"I know it, boys; but ye don't know what the ole woman is. She counts up every pint of whisky that goes inter the bottles; and there ain't no use a-tryin' water on you fellers. Ye'd spot it in a minit. It's got to come aout of my wages; and that's the meanness of the cuss."

"Waal, I wouldn't feel so hard about it," said the Forty Niner. "Ye see, the pore galoot got nigh wiped aout, the other night, when he struck that stranger that come through hyar with a wheelbar. Warn't he a deceivin' cuss that same? Wonder whar he went to? Reckin The Angel knows, but he won't tell."

"What makes ye say that?" asked Sleepy Joe.

"Cause he went arter them weepins of his, that Brimstone Jack lost fur him; and when he come back and didn't hev them with him, one of the boys axed him whar they war. And he kinder smiled and said that warn't nobody's biz. Naow, The Angel ain't the boy to let nary galoot git away with his weepins, and never squeal abaout it. Ef he'd had far to hunt fur 'em, he wouldn't ha' come back hyar, so meek-like, and stand all the guff the boys give him abaout 'em. It's my apinion that Charley Jones knows jest whar that cuss is—and hyar he comes, by gum!"

Sure enough, the dandified figure of Charley Jones sauntered in, and as The Angel took his place by the bar, the thirsty men around it, as by one consent, came sidling up and stood expectantly there.

Charley nodded, and the barkeeper looked inquiringly round, to which the answer came immediately in chorus:

"Give us the same, Bill."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANGEL TALKS.

"WELL, gentlemen," said the dandified Angel, as he leaned against the bar, when all had taken their drinks, "and what's the news to-day? Pretty quiet Sunday; ain't it?"

Jim Barnes coughed.

"Yes, pretty quiet. Say, Angel—"

"Well, what's the matter, Jim?"

"You mind that cuss with the wheelbar that come in hyar, a few days ago?"

"I remember him well. He was a stranger, and you fellows took him in—in a horn. I don't wonder he's lit out."

"Whar do you s'pose he's gone to, Angel?"

It was Sleepy Joe who asked the question.

The Angel laughed.

"Gone to? How the deuce should I know?"

"But he's got your weepins, Charley; and it ain't the thing fur no man to be goin' raound the country with any of the weepins of a man as hails from Dog-Town," said Joe mildly.

Charley shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you very anxious for the honor of Dog-Town? If you are, why the dickens don't you go and get them back for me?"

Sleepy Joe opened his eyes.

"Git 'em back fur you, Charley? Why, ain't you able to do that yerself?"

"I suppose I am; but you fellows appear to think it's your business, and not mine; so the best thing you can do is to attend to it."

And Charley leaned against the bar, with his hands in his pockets, and the smiling look on his face, which, as one of the boys said, he wore "the day he killed Tom Collins."

That look was defiance to every man in the room, and they all knew it; but no man took it up, for they knew that the little "Angel" was

the "quickest man at a shoot," in the whole of Dog-Town.

Jim Barnes, however, went on, with a sneer: "Yes, it's all very well to say that, Charley; but this ain't the maountings, and we ain't that 'ar stranger. They say he's a mighty good man, and—"

"And so he is," the gambler returned. "If you are anxious to make his acquaintance, I can tell you where to find him."

"Where? where?" asked more than one; for there was a great curiosity to know all they could about the stranger.

Charley eyed the ceiling meditatively.

"Well, if you will take the mountain-paths, and go on for about three days, in the wildest places you can find, probably you may run on him. If you get shot, it won't be my fault. That is all I have to say."

"Reckin he took the starch aout of you, to hyar you talk," remarked Jim, sarcastically.

"I know I wouldn't let no man take my weepins, and go off, with nary scratch to show fur it."

The eyes of the little gambler blazed, as he spoke, in a slow tone of deliberation, which he never used unless he was dangerous.

"Look here, Mr. Barnes, you are going too far, and perhaps you don't know it."

Jim Barnes did not alter his position, as he answered with equal slowness:

"That's fur you to say, of course. I know this. You went to the maountings arter your weepins, an' come back withaout 'em. I dunno what happened thar, fur I warn't thar; but it looks very much as ef you'd met a man better'n yourself, an' that's what the boys think, anyway. If ye hadn't, ye'd ha' brought 'em back with yer."

"Very well," said the little gambler, resuming his coolness. "That's all a matter of conjecture, and you can hold your own opinion. The man was all alone, and in the mountains, and he asked me if I would lend my weapons. I lent them to him, after he had given them up. If there is any gentleman present who is willing to say he doubts my word, I am waiting to hear him say it. Come, there is a fair challenge."

And he looked round the room, with the result of dead silence, till he went on:

"So. Nobody willing to back that sort of talk. Well, I'm not particular. That poor devil in the mountains is as harmless as a cat. He wouldn't have hurt a fly, if you had not set on him, ten to one. As it is, he served Brimstone Jack just right, and you fellows were a parcel of fools to go after him the way you did, and not see where he was hiding. I found him as soon as I went back, and I lent him the rifle and pistols. The next time you see him, maybe he will cut the combs of better men than Brimstone Jack."

So saying, he sauntered away from the bar, and out of the saloon, while Jim Barnes observed:

"Thar's su'thin' 'tween those two, an' I dunno what it is; but I'm gwine to find aout. Which of you boys is game to go a-gunnin' in the maountings, fur this mean cuss, that wouldn't treat the boys. I'm in, fur one."

"I'll go, ef ye want me," said Sleepy Joe, "but I don't see what harm the pore feller done, Jim. He was a stranger, and we didn't act squar' to'rds him, nohow, to my thinkin'."

But Sleepy Joe's words found no echo in the bosoms of those around him, save a growl, which showed that the men of Dog-Town were in a state of deadly hostility to the poor, inoffensive stranger, who had come to the valley only to be left alone.

"I'll go with ye, Jim," said Dan O'Toole, eagerly. "Sure I didn't like the looks of the spalpeen, the first moment I set eyes on him, and I'd like no better sport nor to jump him and take all the dust the villain's got wid him, in the mountains. Sure he's a black-muzzled thief, anyway, and no dacent man would go round wid nagurs' weepins, whin he c'd have 'em like the rest of the boys."

"Good fur you, Barney; that's the talk," were the cries that came from various parts of the saloon, as another and another man came up, and said he was willing to go after the mysterious stranger, with a view to personal chastisement.

Jim Barnes seemed to be satisfied, for he announced his plans at once:

"I'll go home and git my rifle, boys; and we kin go gunnin', this arternoon. It's jest the day, fur we'll hev to go to work to-morrer. Mebbe we mou't run on suthin' else in the maountings while we're huntin' this cuss, and so we'll say an hour from naow, at the head of the valley."

And he sauntered off to his hut in the back part of the settlement, whence he soon emerged, with a pair of revolvers at his belt and a Sharpe's rifle in his hand, the common weapons of the day, with men of his kind.

Inside of the stipulated hour he was joined by Sleepy Joe, Dan O'Toole, alias the Lamb, Colonel Vandervoort, and three other worthies, named respectively, "Prairie Snooks," "Hoosier Bill," and "Toughy"—names which had replaced their appellations proper, so completely that no one ever thought of calling them by anything but their nicknames.

The party thus contained seven well-armed men, all of whom could be depended on to shoot at sight and not miss a man.

Jim Barnes led the way, and they went up the valley to the place where they had lost the track of Louis Badeau, the last time they were there.

A short examination there showed them nothing, for they were not trackers, and the traces of the wheels of the barrow had by this time become entirely extinct, in the waters of the stream up which Louis had taken it.

"Reckin the best thing we kin do is to go straight up the stream," remarked Sleepy Joe. "The Angel told us to go thar and foller the maounting passes, and it's my apinion it's the quickest way we kin come on the cuss."

No one had anything better to offer, so they took Joe's advice and climbed up the side of the series of little cascades that marked the entrance of the stream from the upper valleys. They entered the first, but found it as lonely as if they had been a hundred miles from any human habitation.

No traces of the fugitive being discovered there, they went on to the next and the next, when Jim Barnes uttered a cry of delight, as he pointed to a pool in the midst of the valley, by which there were decided marks of a washing establishment that had not long been abandoned.

"The darned mean, ornary galoot!" he exclaimed. "Ef he hain't b'en hyar, with a pocket of nuggets all to hisself, and hain't had the heart to tell the boys a word about it. Tell ye what it is, boys, ef we meet that cuss, the best thing we kin do is to string him up fur his meanness. To go and wash for gold all by hisself! It's the meanest thing I ever heerd on."

The sentiment met with universal approbation, though it is probable there was not a man there who would not have done the same had he had a fair opportunity. The lust of gold had taken possession of them all, and their eyes glared with avarice as they regarded the evidence that a single man had been in that lonely vale, and had been washing for gold, with a success that they knew from their own experience must be considerable, for these virgin "pockets," as they were called, were sure to contain the accumulated results of many washings from the quartz-rocks above.

The fact that the pool was abandoned showed them that the pocket had probably been worked out, while the trail of the wheelbarrow, which was plain from the side of the pool on its way up the valley to an upper ravine, showed that the owner had gone off to search for richer diggings.

No words were exchanged after the first exclamation of Jim Barnes; but the seven miners followed the trail of the barrow in silence, with compressed lips and their rifles in hand ready to fire at a moment's notice.

They traversed the valley and entered the next, when they found the mountains growing higher and steeper round them, while the stream had sunk to a mere thread, and there was no sign of any man having been there, save for the trail of the single wheel, that went on as straight as an arrow through the midst of the valley into the next above.

Evidently the solitary prospector had taken no pains to conceal his trail, or they would not have found it so easily.

So they wandered on for several miles, till at last Colonel Vandervoort, who was at one side of the party, looking ahead, instead of at the track, uttered an exclamation:

"There he is, gentlemen!"

They stopped and saw, in the direction the colonel was pointing, the faint curl of a wreath of smoke coming over the top of the rocks, in the next valley beyond them.

The sight made them halt; for, ready as they were to engage in the hunt, the moment the game was in sight, the men hesitated.

Not that they were afraid; but there was something in what Charley Jones had said to them in the bar-room, that made them pause, before they rashly burst in on the stranger in the midst of a mountain solitude.

Jim Barnes was the first to break the silence as he said:

"Waal, gentlemen, what air you gwine to do?"

"Go in and jump the thief o' the world," was the angry reply of Dan O'Toole. "Didn't he say he w'dn't trate the boys, and hasn't he gone off, be himself, and niver lettin' a man of us into the saycret? We'll jist jump him and say no more."

"Then I ain't in with ye," said Sleepy Joe, in a decided tone. "It ain't the squar' thing to go and jump a pore galoot that never did no one any harm, as I knows on. Let's go in and pay him a visit. Mebbe he ain't as bad as some of ye think, and thar ain't no harm in talkin' civil. If the man don't answer civil, it's allers time enough to jump."

Jim Barnes nodded.

"That's my advice too. I don't wish the cuss no harm. But he's got to do the same as the rest of the boys, or eat dirt. That's talk, boys, and don't you furgit it."

And the stalwart Forty-Niner led the way up

the valley to the corner of the rocks, where the curl of smoke was visible over the top.

As they turned the corner, they came in sight of a little tent by a pool of water with the remains of a fire in front of it, while the carcass of a mountain sheep hung on a stunted pine tree, in front of the tent; but no person was visible in the valley.

They advanced cautiously, for they were all men who had heard a great deal of the stratagems of Indians, and were convinced that the unknown miner was a half-breed, if not pure Indian.

CHAPTER IX.

A GENERAL ROUT.

As the miners advanced the solitude of the valley seemed to be complete, and the silence bred, even in their reckless souls, a certain sense of awe.

They walked slower and slower as they came nearer to the tent, till they could see inside it and perceived that it was empty.

Then of course their courage rose, and Dan O'Toole called out valiantly:

"Where are ye, ye black-muzzled, black-hearted thief! Come out of yer hole and we'll pulverize ye; that's what we'll do!"

Of course there was no answer, and Dan proceeded to investigate the tent, which he found to contain nothing beyond a pair of blankets and a few skins of deer and mountain sheep.

Of gold there was no sign, though that was the real object of the party; and Sleepy Joe said:

"Ah, what's the use of pryin' inter a man's haouse? Come away, boys. He ain't to hum, and thar ain't no sorter decency in starin' at the tent."

"You go to blazes and mind yer own biz," the little Irishman snarled. "Av I wanter stare, I can stare. Here! look at that now!"

With that he gave the pole of the little tent a violent kick and brought the whole structure down on the ground, when he uttered a wild yell of triumph, and began to dance around the fallen ruins, shouting:

"Burn the black-hearted vill'in and all his traps, boys! Burn 'em! burn 'em!"

He was in the midst of his antics when the sharp report of a rifle was heard, echoed by the rocks on every side, and a bullet dashed into the ground at his feet and knocked the dirt in his face, stinging it severely, when the miners started and peered round in every direction, their rifles cocked and pointed at the hills, but seeing nothing to tell whence came the shot.

No one could tell whence the shot had proceeded, but none the less, it sobered them at once, and Dan O'Toole said:

"Bedad, an' isn't that a black-hearted thief fur ye, to be shootin' at a poor boy fur havin' a little fun."

Then Jim Barnes, who had the sharpest eyes of the party, called out:

"Look out fur yerselves, boys. That galoot has got a bead drawn on us, and the next time he mou't bring some one daown."

"Why, whar is he?" asked the colonel.

"Darned ef I know," was the reply; "but I'm sure of one thing, that this ain't no place fur any man to stay, when he's got a head on his shoulders. I'm gwine to git up and git."

And he suited the action to the word by taking the back trail to the end of the valley, where he hid himself behind a rock, and waited for the appearance of the man who had fired the shot.

The rest of the miners did the same, all but Dan O'Toole, who, having a little whisky aboard, and feeling pot-valiant, stooped down to the fire and deliberately tried to take thence a brand to burn the tent down.

He was in the very act of stooping, when a second report was heard, and a bullet whizzed through the air and struck him, with the result of making him leap into the air with a loud howl of pain, when he ran off, as hard as he could go, to the place where the rest of the miners were hiding, shouting as he went:

"Oh, the black-hearted thief of the world! Look what he did!"

The bullet had torn the seat of his pantaloons, without wounding him seriously; but the blood was dripping on the ground as he ran, and the miners greeted him with a roar of derisive laughter.

Dan was raving mad at the disgrace that had befallen him, and he shouted angrily:

"Ye may laugh, boys; but I tell ye I'll git even with the thief for that shot. Here now. Whar is he? Did ye see the shot?"

Jim Barnes pointed to a spot on the top of the rocks at the other end of the valley.

"It came from there," he said gravely; "and it's my opinion, boys, that the man who fired it kin take every one of us, afore we kin reach him. We got to git up and dust aout of this, or we'll all git wiped aout. That cuss knows he's got a good posish."

The spot he pointed to was inaccessible from where they were, without taking a long circuit, during which they would be compelled to remain in plain sight, from the position of the unknown marksman, and be liable to be shot down without an opportunity to return the fire.

Under these circumstances, even the ardor of

Peppery Dan O'Toole cooled sensibly, and the Irishman observed more soberly:

"It's a bad box we're in, intirely, boys, and no mistake. What'll we do?"

"Do?" responded Sleepy Joe. "Thar's only one thing we kin do, and that is to git up and git."

Jim Barnes nodded his head in approval, remarking:

"That's whar ye're right, Joe. Thar ain't nothin' to be gained by stayin' hyar, 'cept shots. Ef we wanter rouse this snoozer aout, we got to git more boys, and git raound the other side of him. It's my apinion he knows when he's got a good thing, and he ain't gwine to be so easy to raout aout of that posish."

Colonel Vandervoort here put in:

"Jim's saound. It's the only way, boys. We might wait a bit and see what he does; but till he comes aout of that place we've no chance."

Hoosier Bill stretched his form on the ground behind the rock.

"Reckin the cunnel's right, boys. Wait a bit."

This advice suited everybody, even Dan; for it did not promise a disgraceful retreat.

The miners waited behind the rock, and kept a keen lookout on the place where the little puff of smoke had been spied by Jim Barnes, when Dan O'Toole received his ridiculous wound.

But after the lapse of an hour or more, there was no sign of a movement in that direction, and Jim remarked:

"Guess the feller ain't gwine to move, boys."

The last words were on his lips, when something sounded right above the heads of the group, and Sleepy Joe, with a shout of warning, jumped up and began to run down the valley, just as a rock, weighing about a hundred pounds, came crashing and bumping down the almost perpendicular side of the ravine, and fetched up in the midst of the party, as the men scattered in dismay.

It had come from right over their heads, and very nearly struck Dan O'Toole; who seemed to be the special target of the hidden enemy.

The rock was shattered into fragments as it fell, and the splinters covered the party below with dust, while Hoosier Bill was nearly blinded, and Prairie Snooks was struck by one of the pieces in the face, scratching him sharply and sending him off down the valley as hard as he could run.

Before the men below could recover from their astonishment, another rock, not quite so large, came down beside the first, and they waited for nothing further, but fled in disorder till they had vacated the valley entirely, and entered the next below, when they halted at last, pale with the shock, in spite of all their courage.

Even Dan was scared at last, and his face was dark with rage as he said:

"The bloody-minded thief! Ah, av I won't be even wid him some day!"

But, for all his desire for revenge, he did not stay his flight, though he ceased to run, and confined himself to walking.

The whole party continued their flight down the valley, and staid for no further acquaintance with the man who had put them to flight in so signal a manner. They went on till they reached Dog-Town, and the first person they saw there was the lazy little Angel, who inquired in the sweetest tones:

"Well, gentlemen, did you find the man you were looking for?"

Jim Barnes attempted to put on an air of innocence as he replied:

"No, in course not. We hunted high and low; but the cuss knows whar to hide. We faound his tent, but he warn't thar."

The Angel smiled.

"So you found his tent? Why didn't you wait till he came home? He might have treated you civilly, if you had done the same. Did you wait long?"

Jim Barnes was embarrassed. If any other man in camp had asked him the same question, he would have given an uncivil answer; but Charley Jones was one of those men who were apt to resent incivility in a way that even Jim Barnes did not care to provoke without a good cause.

Dan O'Toole had vanished to his quarters, and the colonel had gone away; while the other members of the party had disappeared to their cabins, with a celerity that showed they did not want to be questioned.

So Jim answered, civilly enough.

"No; we hadn't time. Fine evening, Charley. Got to git supper. So long."

And he went off, as carelessly as he could, with the mortified sense that Charley was in a chuckle as he turned his back, though the little gambler did not laugh aloud.

So Jim Barnes went to his own tent; hung up his rifle on the log-wall; took off one of the pistols with which he was armed, and lighted his pipe, with the idea of having a quiet smoke and thinking over what had happened, before supper. Jim was mortified at the way in which his first plan had failed, and was thinking whether he had done exactly right in going after a man who had never harmed him, in the way he had.

"The cuss was civil enough," he muttered to himself, as he sat there, puffing away. "He asked the way to Dog-Town, and I told him he'd better not go thar; but he *would* do it, and the boys want thar fun. I d'no what to do naow. They'll have the laugh on us, ef we don't do suthin' to gitsquar', and I don't see haow we're gwine to do it. Wish we hadn't gone thar at all, or done better, ef we did. Reckin I won't go no more."

If he had only kept to this resolution, it might have been better for Jim Barnes; but as he was revolving things in his mind, came a tap at the door of the hut, and the voice of Colonel Vandervoort inquired:

"Anybody at home thar?"

The colonel, though a man of education, had a strong Southern accent, and said "thar" and "raound," the same as the rest of the miners, who had all caught the prevailing twang from the numerous Kentuckians and Tennesseans that flocked to the mines, in the early gold excitement.

"Come in, cunnel," was the response; and Vandervoort lifted the flap of the doorway and entered the tent, which was of the kind common at the mines, the walls being built up with logs to a height of about six feet, without windows or other light than that afforded by the roof, which was covered with the tent.

At the end of this little tenement was a fireplace of logs and clay, on the hearth of which burned a smoldering fire, on which was set a frying-pan, which was hissing away, while the miner smoked his pipe.

At one side of the room was a bed-place, made of logs, covered with twigs of spruce and the blankets of the Forty-Niner; and the whole hut presented an aspect of rudeness and poverty which would have disgusted a person from the East, till he had learned what comfort could be hidden under such apparently unpromising materials.

The colonel took his seat on the side of the bed, while Jim occupied a stool of home manufacture, and the conversation was opened.

"Jim," said the colonel, "the story is all over the camp, and Dan O'Toole is just raving. The boys won't give him a minute's peace till he gets squar' with that fellow in the mountains."

Jim spit in the fire.

"Waal, what air ye to do abaout it, cunnel?"

"There's only one thing to do. We must go in the night, and jump that fellow's ranch. In the daytime he can get the best of us. If you're game to try it to-night, I'm with you; but we don't want any more of those noisy fools that don't know how to do anything but run."

Jim looked thoughtfully at the fire.

"I dunno but what you're right, cunnel," he said; "but that ain't what's troublin' me."

CHAPTER X.

AN EVENING'S AMUSEMENT.

THE colonel looked surprised.

"What does trouble you, then?"

"It's this, cunnel. I dunno what you think abaout it; but I think we hain't acted like white men to this pore cuss, whoever he is."

Vandervoort looked still more surprised.

"Why not? He's nothing but a half-breed Indian, and not worth considering, anyhow. Besides, he has set the camp at defiance, and refused to treat the boys, the same as you or I or any other white man might do. If we sit daown and let him run over us, me and you, Jim, we might as well give up the thing for good, and say we are only a couple of women, who can't take care of themselves. You know there is such a thing as law and order, and it has to be maintained. We can't let that man hold us at defiance. Then, too, he has shot at one of our men and wounded him—"

Jim interrupted at once:

"Stop right thar, cunnel. Don't think that's quite the thing to talk abaout. Dan O'Toole got suthin' he won't never say much abaout, ye kin bet on that, and he wouldn't want no more fuss made abaout it than he kin help. It don't look well to have yer name in the papers, as bein' shot in the place whar ye sit daown, cunnel. You wouldn't like it, and I wouldn't. The less ye say abaout that, the better Dan will like it, I reckon."

"Well," said Vandervoort with a slight smile, "we'll let that go for the present; but then he nearly killed all of us by rolling his infernal rocks down on aour heads. I don't propose to stand that, you know, and I don't think you ought either, Jim. He beat us this time, and we've got to get squar' with him somehaow."

Jim absently removed the frying-pan from the fire and shook it, before he replied:

"Thar's suthin' in that, and I hate to be beat as bad as the next man; but I don't see how we kin go to work and kill the cuss fur what he's done."

"I don't want to kill him, Jim; but he's got to have a lesson, or the men down in Dead Man's Hollow will have the laugh on us for the rest of the year. So I say this: if you are game to come with me to-night, I'll go and beat up this smart gentleman's quarters, and we will have some satisfaction for the scare he has given us."

Jim seemed to be impressed by what his companion said, for he went on with his preparations for supper in dead silence, evidently thinking over what had been said, and as soon as the meal was ready he made a motion to the colonel.

"Come on, afore it gits cold, cunnel."

They ate their supper, which consisted of pork, coffee and sodden cakes of dough, baked in the ashes, with the relish given by the mountain to the poorest fare, and when they had finished, Jim said:

"Waal, cunnel, I'll do it."

Vandervoort stretched out his hand.

"Put it thar, Jim. We'll cut his comb yet, and they sha'n't say we took odds nuther."

It was getting dark as he spoke, and about an hour later, when the Eureka House was in full blast in its usual Sunday evening style, Jim and the colonel stole out of the camp and took their way up the valley, threading the ravines they had traversed in the morning, and arriving after midnight at the very place where they had seen the tent in the morning.

The silence in the mountains in the night-time was oppressive, and they felt awed in spite of themselves as they stole on.

Their only way of telling where they were was by the forms of the mountains on either side, by the faint light of the stars; and the idea that they might stumble on a secret foe in the dark was decidedly disquieting.

At last, as they thought, they had come to the very place where they had hidden behind the rocks in the morning.

They recognized it by the fragments that were still scattered round it; and the dull, red glow of a fire in the distance showed them that they were right, and that the tent was there still.

Vandervoort turned to Jim.

"Are ye ready?" he asked in a whisper.

Jim's reply was to cock his rifle.

"Come on, then," said the colonel; and with that they ran forward a few steps, and were making for the tent, when something caught Vandervoort's foot in the darkness, and he fell headlong on the ground with a grunt of pain, while Jim Barnes came tumbling after him, and, in the fall, unconsciously pulled the trigger of his rifle, when a flash lit up the dark valley, and the loud report echoed from the mountain-sides like thunder with the most startling effect.

It seemed as if all the noises of pandemonium had suddenly broken loose, though they only lasted for about three or four seconds.

A stretched cord had been put across the path, and both men had fallen headlong into a shallow pit strewn with sharp rocks, on which they had cut their hands and knees, besides rousing the tenant of the valley from the soundest sleep in which he could have been plunged.

Jim was the first to recover himself, and he swore viciously as he scrambled to his feet, hastily cramming a fresh cartridge into the breech of his rifle.

Colonel Vandervoort was slower to rise; but he at last stood by his friend, and then they watched the fire and listened intently.

The silence of death had again fallen on the valley, and both men, in spite of their courage, hesitated to go forward.

They knew that they must have wakened the man in the tent, if he were there, and the fact of the cord that had thrown them showed that he was up to a good many tricks.

Vandervoort was hurt, and he limped as he came up alongside Jim, whispering:

"It's too late to go back naow, Jim. Come on."

The valley was dark, save for the faint light of the stars in the middle; and the men stole forward in the shadow at the side of the rocks, till they arrived opposite the tent.

They saw the embers of a fire, that had not been left to die out very long; for, every now and then, a glimmering flame shot out from the dull red of the embers.

Presently both men, as with one accord, made a rush, with their rifles advanced, and dashed at the tent, which they reached, only to find, to their astonishment, that it was still empty.

Hardly had this fact forced itself on their attention, when there came a light patter, as if of the hurrying feet of an animal at full speed, and the next minute Jim Barnes fell to the ground, felled like a log by a blow on the back of the head, while Vandervoort, who faced round to receive the enemy, was confronted by a tall figure, which aimed a sweeping blow at his head with a long club.

The colonel instinctively fired his rifle at the figure, with no sensible aim, and the other uttered a cry. Then the club rose in the air and fell on the colonel, who raised his rifle to ward the blow, all in a hurry as he was.

It fell, and the rifle was heard to crack under the strain, when the club rose and fell again, and the strange figure was dancing round the astonished and bewildered colonel, who knew not how to defend himself from the blows that were showered on him.

One of them reached him at last, and struck the side of his head, partially stunning him.

Before he could recover his senses, he was

struck, a second time, on the top of the head, beating down his guard, and then he fell on the earth, stunned, like his partner, Jim.

Then the strange figure ceased its wild antics, and Louis Badeau looked down on two men, stiff and insensible, whom he had overcome, by the exercise of his Indian training in the Canadian woods in the days of his boyhood.

He went to the fire, threw on some dry wood, and made a blaze; then returned to the senseless men, and carefully removed their arms from their bodies, before he took any measures to revive them.

Both had been stunned badly, Jim the worst; for the blow had been delivered at the back of his neck, and had shocked the whole of the motor nerves, so that he was limp and helpless.

When Louis lifted his hand, it fell with a dull drop, as if the man were dead, though Badeau could feel the beating of his heart.

Colonel Vandervoort was not so badly hurt as Jim, though he felt it more, for he was stirring and groaning, as the other bent over him.

The young man went to the fire again, and put on some more dry wood, before he returned.

Then he went up to the colonel, who was just reviving, and said to him quietly:

"Well, monsieur, and what is the matter with you to-night?"

Vandervoort felt for his pistols, and when he found that they were gone, he said feebly:

"Sir, you've got the best of it this time. I cave, as the boys say."

Louis smiled derisively.

"I should say you did. Have I ever done you any harm?"

The question confused the colonel, who felt pretty sore as it was.

He tried to defend himself by assuming a sulky tone, as he answered:

"You've got the best of it this time, and you can kill us both, if you want. I don't ask you to spare us."

Louis compressed his lips slightly.

"Very well. Then the best thing I can do is to tie you hand and foot, and let the wildcats eat you."

The colonel could not help a slight shudder, but he stiffened his heart to say:

"You can do as you please, I suppose; but if you do such a thing as that, the boys will get square with you some day."

Louis curled his lip scornfully.

"The boys! Yes, they are a nice set of fellows, to hunt down a man for nothing, as they have me. It would serve you right, if I blew out your brains, *now*. You, and the men with you, deserve no more mercy than so many wild beasts. You have attacked me, ten to one, and I have got the best of you. Now, what are you going to do for the future?"

He spoke in a tone of menace, and the colonel could make no answer, till Louis repeated the question.

"What are you going to do in the future, sir? Am I to be hunted in this way forever, or will you leave me alone hereafter?"

Colonel Vandervoort felt the force of the question, and began to have a slight sensation of shame at what he had done.

"I suppose we shall leave you alone," he said sullenly. "At all events, I shall. You have the best of us, up here, in this hole in the mountains; but if ever you come down into the camp, you can look out for trouble. We don't allow a man to defy us, as you have."

Louis shrugged his shoulders.

"I see. Well, I shall not trouble you there. All I ask is to be let alone; for I am a peaceable man. Take your friend and get out of this, if you don't want to be killed. Your life is in my hands, and you know it; but I spare it. Get out of here at once."

And with that word he went over to Jim Barnes, who was still lying where he had been stretched on the ground, and shook the fallen man.

"Come, get up and go home," he said, and Jim, who seemed to be reviving, stirred and muttered to himself, but was unable to rise.

Vandervoort had risen, however, and came over to his fallen friend. He tried to raise Jim, but the limp and helpless way in which the Forty-Niner fell back, every time, showed that he was thoroughly paralyzed.

Louis left him for a moment and went off.

He came back, presently, wheeling the very barrow in which he had put his baggage when he first entered the valley, and said to Vandervoort, in a curt, snappish way:

"Here, put him here, and take him away. The next man that comes to hunt me, will have to be shot. I have shown enough mercy to men of your stamp. Put him in, and wheel him away."

He helped the colonel to put the limp and demoralized Jim into the wheelbarrow, and saw him leave the valley at last.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MORNING'S REFLECTION.

MONDAY morning in Dog-Town was generally rather a sorrowful time. The men who then went back to their digging had all been on a spree, the day before, and felt more or less de-

moralized. They went to their holes in the banks of the stream, and labored sullenly, while a good many of them could not muster the courage for that exertion, and slept away the effects of the previous day's debauch in their tents.

Colonel Vandervoort and his friend, Jim Barnes, were among the sorrowful ones, on the morning after their little expedition to the mountains. The colonel was in Jim's hut, nursing the man he had brought to the settlement in the wheelbarrow, and Jim was sleeping stupidly, the shock having completely demoralized him.

No one had known of the expedition of the hopeful pair, the night before; for they had stolen out in the dark, and had come back before daylight. The colonel was in hopes that it could be kept entirely quiet, but this was not to be; for he and Jim were too well known in camp for their absence not to be missed.

The early morning passed by, with the miners at work in their holes; and as noon came, and the men repaired to their dinners, they began to make inquiries after the colonel and Jim.

One thing led to another, and at last a deputation went to the tent where the colonel usually resided, to hunt him up.

They found the tent empty, and thence proceeded to Jim Barnes's hut, where they found the colonel by the bedside of his friend.

One side of his face looked as if he had been engaged in a prize-fight; for it was all battered in, and the eye on that side was swollen and black, from blows he had received from Louis Badeau's club, the night before.

Hoosier Bill looked in, and then sauntered into the tent, with Prairie Snooks, remarking:

"Hello, cunnel; what's up?"

"Nothing that I know of, gentlemen," replied the colonel, indifferently. "I think our friend here has got a fever, and I am nursing him; that's all that I know of. He needs to be kept quiet."

But the hint, though a strong one, failed to quench the curiosity of Hoosier Bill.

He looked curiously at Vandervoort, asking: "Why cunnel, what's the matter with yer face? It looks as ef you and Jim had b'en havin' a rough-and-tumble, all to yerselves."

"Maybe we have; and if we have, I don't know that it concerns any one but ourselves," replied Vandervoort, trying to look as indifferent as he could. "The fact is, gentlemen, we want to be left alone; that is all. Jim is sick, and I am nursing him."

Hoosier Bill bent over the sleeper.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked. "He don't act as ef he'd got a fever. Looks more like he'd b'en in a muss, and got knocked out, cunnel."

Then Prairie Snooks stared hard at the sleeper, and observed, sagely:

"Wal, ef that's a fever, it's a durned queer sort of fever. Cunnel, you've b'en on a tear, and 'tain't no use denyin' it."

"Well, and suppose we have, what business is that of yours?" asked the colonel, snappishly.

Hoosier Bill, who was examining the hut, here called out:

"By gum, boys, ef Jim hain't got a new wheelbarrow, hyar. Say, cunnel, whar in blazes did ye git that?"

The colonel bit his lips. He had brought that barrow inside, on purpose to hide it; when, if he had left it outside, the chance was that it might not have been noticed. The very precaution he had taken had attracted attention to it.

"I don't know that it's any business of yours—" he began to say, when he was interrupted by Dan O'Toole, who had just entered, and was examining the barrow with a keenness that showed he was an old handler of such machines.

"Bedad, boys, av it ain't the very thing that black-muzzled spalpeen brought into the camp, the day he come first. Colonel, did ye take it from him? Boys, the colonel and Jim's been to the mountains, and they've laid out the black-muzzled thief, that wouldn't trate the boys. Hurroo!"

The news created an excitement at once, and the miners all began to talk together, when the noise awoke Jim, who lifted his head and let it fall with a grunt of pain, as he asked:

"What's the matter hyar, boys?"

Dan O'Toole cried out:

"Jimmy, boy, did ye take the spalpeen's wheelbarrow, or didn't ye? It's here."

Jim looked round and saw the barrow in the corner of the hut.

"I dunno," he said, feebly. "If we did, it's more'n I know. I got laid out, and that's all I want to know. I ain't gwine up thar no more, ye kin bet yer life on that."

Then Colonel Vandervoort, seeing that, if his partner was allowed to speak, he would let the secret out, put in:

"Now, boys, don't you see the poor fellow's out of his head? If you go on talking to him, he will have a relapse sure. Do please go out of the hut. I'll come out and tell you all about it if you like."

The promise induced them to leave the hut, while Jim, who was still stupid, lay back on his blankets, and rubbed his forehead.

When the colonel got outside, he told them a story about his expedition to the mountains, in

which he suppressed the fact of any fight at all, and said that Jim had fallen down a hole near the camp of the unknown man, and that he, Vandervoort, had been obliged to pick him up, and bring him home in the wheelbarrow.

When they asked him where the barrow had been found, he told them more lies, and left them with the impression, which he wished spread, that the stranger who had made such a commotion in the settlement had fled the country, leaving his barrow behind, so that there was no use looking for him any more.

They departed, only half satisfied with the story; but the colonel, when he was about to go back into the tent, was confounded to see, not far away, little Charley Jones, the "Angel" of the green table, and Charley was sauntering toward the tent, in a way that showed that he, too, had to have a talk.

The colonel turned his back on the advancing "Angel," vanished into the tent, and was seated by Jim's side again, when the little gambler walked in quietly, and took his own seat at the other side of the bed, with the quiet observation: "Good-morning, colonel. Quite a little time you and Jim had last night."

Vandervoort turned rather red; for the tone in which Charley spoke was different from that of the men. It was the tone of one who was not in search of information, but ready to give it.

"Yes," he said, as coolly as he could. "We did have a time. What of it?"

"Oh, nothing of consequence," replied the gambler, coolly; "but I thought you might like your pistols back. The gentleman in the mountains says that they don't shoot straight, and he has no use for them; so he sends them back to you. I thought you had better judgment, colonel. You ought to know that a pistol that doesn't shoot straight, isn't worth having. Here it is."

He reached down behind his back, under the loose coat he wore, and handed the astonished colonel the pistol he had taken to the mountain, the night before.

"It's not loaded," remarked Charley placidly, as the colonel took the weapon. "The gentleman who gave it to me told me he had fired it off this morning, at a mark, and that he found it carried to the right, and high. He recommends that you file the sight a little, and hold low, when next you go gunning. Jim's rifle, he tells me, is all right, and he will have pleasure in keeping it, till you come after it. Jim's pistol, he tells me also, is much better, and he keeps it. The rifle you took with you got the stock broken, and so he has left it in the first valley, where it lies at your disposal, when you please to go for it. Good-morning, colonel. If ever you feel inclined for a stroll in the starlight again, I shall be happy to go along with you, and see fair play."

And the little gambler walked out of the hut, when the colonel heard him chuckling to himself outside, as he walked away.

Vandervoort ground his teeth as he heard it, and muttered to himself:

"I'll get square with him for this; see if I don't, some day."

He looked at the revolver which had come back to him; and mused on some way to accomplish the threat he had uttered, but could think of none. The story of how he and Jim had "gone for wool, and come home shorn," would be sure to leak out in the camp, before long, and the gallant colonel trembled, as he thought of the ridicule he would be exposed to, as soon as it became public.

Pondering over this, he slowly went to the corner of the hut, took down Jim's powder-flask, and loaded the pistol he had just regained, in a mechanical sort of way, as if not thinking of what he was doing.

The task accomplished, he put it into his belt, and watched Jim, as the poor fellow slept.

In the course of an hour or so, Jim woke up and stared at the colonel, as if he had just begun to recover his senses.

"How do you feel now, Jim?" asked the colonel.

Jim raised his hand to his forehead, and said slowly:

"Pears like I don't feel at all, cunnel. What's happened?"

The colonel hesitated a moment.

"Don't you remember, Jim?" he asked.

"No, I don't. Pears like me and you went somewhar, cunnel, and I got inter some muss. Did any of the boys hit me?"

"No, Jim, you were laid out by the man up in the mountains, that you and I went after."

Jim looked puzzled.

"What man, cunnel?"

"The man that came in here with a wheelbarrow. The same that laid out Dan O'Toole and Brimstone Jack. He hit you on the back of the head, and managed to lay me out too. He has got our weapons, Jim, and there's no use disguising the fact that we got the worst of it, this time."

Jim appeared to be cogitating.

"It were the cuss that lives up in the mountains, a prospectin': ain't it, cunnel?"

"The same, Jim."

"Then I reckon the best thing we kin do is to let him slide fur awhile, cunnel; fur he seems to

be a regular rip-tearer. The way my head feels, I mou't hev b'en in a yearthquake."

The colonel saw that it was no use to talk to him at the time, with any view of encouraging him to thoughts of vengeance; so he said:

"I guess you're right, Jim. I've got through with him, for the present. The next time we go there, we must have enough men to smoke him out of his hole. He's got your rifle and pistols, and he had the impudence to send me back mine, with a message that it didn't shoot straight."

A faint smile curled Jim's lip.

"Reckin he were right, thar, cunnel. You didn't useter be able to hit a pertater, when you was shootin' fur dust; and I wouldn't hev took yer old gun fur a gift. Reckin the man must be a feller unnerstands shootin'. Ye ain't gwine: air ye, cunnel?"

For the colonel had risen, and was going to the door, where he turned to say:

"Yes, Jim, I'd best go. You ain't in a condition to be excited, and you ought to go to sleep a bit. I'll come down and see you, before sunset."

With that he left the hut, and Jim with a weary sigh, turned over on his bed and fell into another stupor, that lasted for hours, and from which he woke up, hungry and weak.

The sun had set; but there was no colonel there, and the injured man crept out of his bunk and went to the fire, to try what he could do to get himself something to eat.

He had been hurt before, and did not mind the sensation of dizziness, which, moreover, was beginning to vanish, as time went on.

He managed to light his fire and get his coffee out of the store-box in the corner, and he was making himself the first drink he had had, since the night before, when the door opened, and a man came into the hut.

Jim turned, to see Charley Jones.

CHAPTER XII.

COUNTING THE COST.

JIM was not surprised to see the "Angel," for he and Charley had been friends, and he had no knowledge of anything that would make them otherwise. He nodded and said:

"Come in, Charley. Hain't got much to offer ye till the coffee's made."

Charley took a seat on the bed, answering:

"I don't want anything; but I thought I'd come in and see how you were. Head any better?"

"Kinder better. What ever did it, Charley? Pears like I couldn't remember nothin'."

Charley leaned forward.

"What do you mean? Have you forgotten where you were last night?"

"Reckin I must hev. It don't seem like thar ever had b'en any last night, Charley. I dunno what happened no more'n you do."

Charley whistled softly.

"You don't mean it, Jim? Why, didn't you and the colonel go out to the mountains last night to get square with the man that shot Dan O'Toole?—never mind where. Why, I saw you going!"

Jim went on staring at the fire.

"I dunno but ye did," he said, slowly.

"Reckin ye must be right, ef ye say ye did, Charley. All I remember is that we went up thar, and suthin' struck me on the head, and then I didn't know nothin' till I woke up hyar this mornin'. Cunnel says my pistols is gone. Hope that ain't true."

"Why not, Jim?"

"Because," said Jim, slowly, "it ain't the right thing fur a man to lose his weepins, Charley; and ef he gits the wust of a fight, it ain't the squar' thing fur another man to take 'em."

Charley laughed.

"I don't know that, Jim. If a man goes out to hunt down another, who never did him any harm, he has no one but himself to blame if he gets left. You went to the mountains two to one, and one man did all the fighting against you and the colonel. He got the best of you both. Now the question is, what should he do? He isn't bound to give you back your weapons, when you tried to use them on him. It's my opinion that, if you snoozers go on much longer, he will get every gun out of the camp, and have the laugh on you all."

Jim's eyes flashed as he stared at the coffee-pot on the fire. It was just beginning to boil, and he made the fact an excuse to watch it and make no reply.

When he had lifted it off, he said, at last:

"Ef you think I'm the man to stay beat, in the way that snoozer beat me, Charley Jones, you're mistook. I'm a Forty-Niner, and we boys don't give in, while thar's a shot left. I'll allow he got the best of me this time; but I'm a-gwine to git squar' with him, afore I die; and don't you furgit it, Angel."

"That's all I wanted to know," said The Angel, rising, with a smile that showed perfect cordiality. "Well, Jim, so long. When you get a chance to get square with that fellow, let me know it, and I'll be on hand to bury him, in case you forget it."

Jim scowled at him, as he went out.

"You're darned smart, I s'pose ye think," he said; "but I won't trouble ye to do no sich thing. I kin do all my own larryin' myself."

Charley looked back with a laugh. "That's just what I think," he said, as he vanished, "and when you do it, it will be well done. Ta, ta, Jim."

Then he was gone, and Jim bent over the fire and finished the cooking of his coffee, which he drank eagerly, feeling so much better, after the draught, as to make him go outside, and stroll down to the Eureka House, to see what was going on there.

He had an uneasy sense that there was something in the air which he did not understand, and he wanted to find out exactly how much was known of his misfortunes.

His memory was coming back, as the stunning sensation of his hurt wore off, and he thought that he would be all right in a little while.

The coffee had set him up for the time, and he had the usual craving of his class for stimulants of a stronger sort.

He found the Eureka House in a blaze of light, and strolled into the bar, where he found the miners as usual, in a circle, ready to take a drink at anybody's expense.

Charley Jones made his appearance at the moment he entered, as if the little gambler had been watching for him, and the first thing he said, as he leaned up against the bar, was:

"Come, gentlemen, what is it, now?"

The signal was understood; the miners crowded round the bar; Charley threw a big double-eagle on the counter, as he gave the invitation, and the barkeeper filled out the drinks.

Brimstone Jack was there, the worse for liquor, as usual; and as soon as he spied Jim, he broke out at once, with drunken insolence:

"Oh, you're a blank of a fighter, you air, I don't think. Talk of me losin' my weepins! It took two Injuns to take 'em from me, and hyar's you and the cunnel let one ornary galoot git away with you two, as ef you was a pair of babies. I swar I'm 'shamed of ye, Jim. That's what I am. It's a shame to Dorg-Town; that's what it is."

Jim made no answer till he had taken down a big drink of whisky, when he turned round on Jack. The miner's head was by no means steady yet; but his temper was up, and his tone was angry, as he snarled:

"What are you talkin' abaout, ye ornary galoot! Say another word, and I'll smack ye in the jaw, and make ye see a month of Sundays."

Brimstone Jack fell back a pace or two, and glared at Jim ferociously.

"You pusillanimous, wall-eyed son of a half-breed Digger Injun," he roared; "you can't smack one side of my face, leave alone the other. I kin whip you, the best day ye ever saw."

The next minute Jim made one stride toward him, and Jack snatched at the pistol he wore in his belt, when Charley Jones, who was beside him, made a grab at his wrist, struck the weapon out of his hand with a smart blow, and said, in the most placid way:

"No, no, Brimstone, that won't do. Jim ain't got a weapon, and you're heeled. Fight him fair, if ye want to fight badly, but the best thing you can do is to take a drink."

Brimstone Jack hesitated. He had been scanning Jim narrowly, since he came in, and had heard all about the blow he had received the night before. He was cogitating in his mind, if he could not, just at that juncture, get the best of the man he would not have dared to face at any ordinary time, and Jim, who was still very weak, saw the look and said to him fiercely:

"Yes, I know what you're thinking of, ye skunk; but ye can't do it, sick or well. I'm sick, but I kin take keer of myself, as well as the next man. Ef you wanten git laid out, come and try."

But Brimstone Jack did not feel quite certain enough to risk the fight, so he put on an air of magnanimity, as he said:

"I hain't got nothen' ag'in' ye, Jim; and I don't wanten fight a sick man; that's sure. Call it squar' and take a drink."

"With you?" echoed Jim, in a tone of intense scorn. "Why, ye darned ornary galoot, they wouldn't trust ye for one glass of whisky; let alone two. When I drink with you, you'll know it."

And the miner walked out of the room with a step not so steady as it might have been, while Jack put his tongue in his cheek, and remarked in a loud aside:

"Off his base, pretty bad; ain't he, boys? What a pity it is I warn't thar. They wouldn't ha' got left so bad."

Charley Jones burst out laughing.

"Oh, come off that. You! Why, if you'd been there, we'd never have seen you again. You'd have been roasted alive by that man in the mountains, in his fire. He's an Indian, I suppose you know, and he puts all his prisoners to the torture."

Jack shuddered slightly.

"Ye're coddin' me, Charley."

"No, I am not. Ask the colonel if he didn't

tell him he was going to tie him hand and foot, and let the wildcats eat him?"

The colonel was coming in at the time, which was the reason Charley appealed to him, and he instantly said:

"Of course he did; and if it hadn't been that I put Jim in the barrow, and ran for our lives, I believe he would have done it; for he had a whole crowd of his fellow-Indians in the hills, just near him."

Jack looked uneasily round. He had heard the story of the colonel's discomfiture; for it had spread round the camp in some mysterious way, no man giving his authority, but everybody having a different story.

He had intended to quiz the colonel and Jim about it; but the unexpected ferocity of Jim, and the fact that the little "Angel" was his ally, had quenched that part of the programme, and he felt too much in awe of the colonel, who was still armed, to venture on any familiarity with him. His curiosity was so intense, however, that he at last asked:

"Waal, cunnel, and haow did it happen?"

Vandervoort turned a pair of fishy eyes on him, with the coldest stare in the world.

"When did *what* happen, sir?"

Jack was confused.

"Waal, I h'ard—that is—I was told—"

"What, sir?"

"That you and Jim Barnes lost yer weepins," the man replied, as stiffly as he could.

The colonel instantly snatched his pistol from his belt, and before Jack could draw his, the other weapon was close to his ear, while the irate colonel hissed:

"Take that back! Take it back, or take the consequences. Come, which is it?"

Jack turned as pale as a ghost, and faltered:

"I didn't mean nothen', cunnel. The boys told me, so I don't know nothen' abaout it, only what they said. I didn't believe it, nohow."

The colonel stooped down to Jack's belt, and took away his pistol before he withdrew the muzzle of his own from its threatening proximity to Brimstone's ear. Then he coolly put the captured weapon in his own belt and said:

"Get out of this, sir, if you don't want to be riddled. I give you three seconds. *Git!*"

And the way he looked was so severe that Jack saw he meant business, started off at once, and ran out of the saloon, when the colonel smiled grimly, observing:

"A joke is a joke, gentlemen; but I don't like those kind of jokes from such bums as that."

Then he took a drink, after inviting the crowd, and from that moment there were no jokes passed on his escapade in Dog-Town, for there was no man who wanted to quarrel about nothing.

They would fight on occasion, but they wanted to be sure of their ground, and the ground was not sure this time.

The party at the bar of the Eureka staid there till the small hours of the morning, and when it dispersed, the till was full of bits of yellow stuff, that no one out of the mines would have taken for money, but which represented a good deal of solid gold in the aggregate.

Charley Jones was the last to leave the house, and he did not go straight to his home, which was in the hotel. On the contrary, he told the barkeeper that he was going for a stroll, and that he might leave the door open for his return.

The little gambler went out up the course of the stream which constituted the main source of the gold discoveries in the camp, till he came to the entrance of the valley in which he had first met Louis Badeau.

He went into this valley and whistled in a peculiar tone, the whistle being answered, almost immediately in the same manner, when he sat down on a rock to wait.

Pretty soon the sound of steps approached, and a dark figure was seen near him.

"Well, Badeau, how goes it?" he asked.

"Well enough," was the reply. "In a few days more I shall be able to hold my own with any man in your camp at shooting."

Charley Jones replied:

"That's the best news I've heard yet. You will want it all, my boy."

CHAPTER XIII.

NO REST FOR LOUIS.

THE tone of the little gambler, as he said this, was graver than usual, and Louis asked him:

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean that, when you come into town, you'll have to do some fighting."

"I expect to."

"Of course you do, but not quite as much as you will have to do."

"In what respect?"

"Well, you see—"

Here Charley paused a moment.

"Well, what?"

"Well, you see, the boys are down on you."

"What for?"

"Because you have run counter to their old customs and prejudices."

"How?"

"By refusing to treat them."

"But I promised my mother I would not be a

drunkard; and from all I see, the men in the diggings are nothing more than a lot of drunkards, who spend all they earn on liquor."

"Very true, and that is the very reason they are the more dangerous to you."

"I don't understand you."

"You will, when you get back to the camp."

"Won't you explain a little?"

"Certainly. You see, the miners are all given to drink, as you say; and they resent any man coming among them who does not drink with them, and who thinks it wrong to drink. I am a pretty hard case myself, and don't call myself a coward, but I wouldn't dare to do what you've done, and come back among them, as you say you are going to do."

Louis seemed to be surprised.

"Why shouldn't I? I have never harmed them, and why should they harm me?"

"Well, for one thing, because you never have harmed them. That is the very thing that they don't like. If you were a murderer and thief, or a gambler, as I am, they would think it all right, and let you have your own way; but when you come among them quietly, they suspect you from the first, and will lay all sorts of traps to draw you into a fight, for anything or nothing."

"Then I am to understand that my life is still in danger, if I go into the camp?"

"Decidedly. That is what I came to warn you about. You see, you have hitherto got the best of every party that has gone against you, and the men are thoroughly enraged. If you had shot one or two of them, there would not have been the exasperating state of things that now exists. You have humiliated Jim Barnes and Colonel Vandervoort, who are both what the boys call 'good men,' and they will never forgive you."

"I never asked them to forgive me," said the young man simply. "I knew that the best thing I could have done with them was to kill them, when I had them at my mercy; but somehow, I could not do it. You might have killed me, you know, but you spared me; and I was bound to return the mercy when I had an opportunity."

Charley was silent for a moment, and then he said, in a tone of voice that showed he was not as cool as usual:

"The fact is, you're too decent a man for the mines, Badeau, and you ought to have some one to take care of you. It's no business of mine; but, if you would only go somewhere else, where you have not done as much as you have here, it would be a good thing for your health."

"But I have nowhere else to go. I have nearly exhausted the washings of the upper stream, and the pockets did not turn out as well as I had an idea they would. I shall have to come down from the mountains at last, and there is no way to get out of them, but through the camp below."

"That is true; but then why should you not do it in the night? It seems to me that you are foolhardy in defying the whole camp, in the way you propose to do. The boys are down on you, and they are none too good to set on you, ten, ay, fifty to one, if they think they see a good chance."

Louis compressed his lips, as he said:

"I am the last man in the world to pick quarrels with any one; but if it comes to running me out of the camp, I will not go, till I have tried my best to stay."

Charley rose with a slight sigh, asking:

"Well, when will you be ready to come?"

"In three days; so you can leave the place, if you don't want to stand by me."

The gambler laughed.

"That's not what troubles me. I don't value my life much, now, or I shouldn't be doing what I am; but I don't want to see a man of your education and refinement killed like a dog, as I fear you will be, when you get into camp."

"Then why are you there? You, too, are a man of education and refinement, very different from the men around you. You might fear for yourself."

"My dear Badeau, I am very different from you. What I am, I have made myself, while you have come here, like a baby, with no more notion of the trials you have to undergo, than the same baby in its mother's arms."

Louis Badeau was silent for a moment and then said quietly:

"Perhaps the baby gets along as well as the gambler in the end, Jones."

The words struck the little gambler in a tender spot apparently, for he made no answer but a stiff sort of:

"Perhaps."

Then there was silence between them for a space, till Louis inquired:

"Is there no advice you could give me, that might be of use to me when I come in? You have been very kind to me, and as you are the only man in that settlement that has shown it, I am willing to take your advice in all points, save keeping away. I must go there, you know, or they would say they had scared me off."

Charley mused a little, and then said:

"The only advice I can give you is this: Don't let any man get the drop on you, if you can help it. The first shot settles the business in most cases, and it is better to take the first man

down than to have to defend yourself from a dozen, by trying to keep the peace, when they don't want it kept."

"I will remember that."

"Besides, I don't want to have you forget what I wrote you about Juanita."

"And who is she?"

"The Queen of the Camp."

"What is that?"

"What is it? Well, that is hard to say, my boy. Juanita has puzzled more people than you. No one knows whether she be maid, wife, or widow. All we know is that she came into camp soon after the diggings were started; that she plays poker better than any man in the camp but myself, and that she never lets any man take a liberty with her. But she has fancies, and when she takes them, it is dangerous to refuse her the friendship she asks."

"You interest me," said Louis. "She must be a strange character."

"She is all that, and more, too."

But here Charley stopped, and would say no more, till Louis asked:

"How do you mean more?"

The gambler hesitated.

"If I tell you, it is a secret, mind."

"If you give it to me, it shall be so."

"It is. Well, then, Juanita is not what she seems. Most people think she is a Mexican; but I am sure she is not, for reasons of my own. Who or what she is exactly, is a mystery which I have never yet unraveled; but I can tell you one thing about her, that, the less you have to do with her, the better."

"Why?"

"Because she delights in nothing so much as setting men by the ears, after she has bewitched them."

Louis smiled.

"Bewitched them! But she can't bewitch me."

"Perhaps you think so; but you had better not let her know you think so."

"Why?"

"Because she would do it then, for pure devilment. Now mind what I tell you. When you get in camp, the first danger you have to look out for is getting shot by surprise; the second is in Juanita's eyes. If you escape the first, you are pretty sure to run on the second."

"Well, I'll try to do the best I can, Charley. In the mean time I'll bid you good-night, unless you would like to come up my way."

"Not to-night, thank you."

And the little gambler rose; shook hands with the young stranger, with a warm clasp that told of his sincerity, and went away down the valley to the Eureka House, where he entered at the side door and found the barkeeper asleep in a chair, waiting for him.

Louis Badeau retraced his steps to the place where he had set up his tent; but he did not enter that humble structure.

He had had too much experience of the ways of his foes to trust himself to sleep in an unguarded place; so he took his blankets; climbed the rocks at a remote point in the valley, and laid himself down under the boughs of a stunted pine tree, that hung out over the edge of the cliffs, and from the foot of which he could command a view of the valley below.

He slept soundly, and it was not till the light of the dawn shone in on the valley, that he woke and looked down instinctively.

He had become watchful and suspicious in his solitude, and was always in dread that something fresh might occur, that would compel him to fight for his life.

There was nothing stirring in the valley, that morning, however, but a pair of wildcats, which were sneaking about the tent as if they had been hunting for something to eat, which was the case.

Louis reached out for the rifle he had taken from Jim Barnes, which lay beside him, and took aim at one of the animals, with the result of tumbling it over, kicking and snarling, while its companion scampered away, just like any other cat, frightened out of its wits at the sudden execution of the unseen marksman.

Then Louis came down from his lofty eyrie on the top of the rocks, and found the wildcat dead by the tent door, while the things inside the tent had been pulled about by the animals during the night, as if they had been holding a regular picnic, all to themselves.

Then the young man, finding that all the fresh provisions he had left in the tent, the night before, had been devoured by the wildcats, set out to get his breakfast in the good old style of the original inhabitants of the valley, before ever a white man set his foot there.

He knew that the mountains were full of game, and he had not profited ill by his early Indian education; for he was a patient and successful hunter, using generally the bow, with which he was an expert, to avoid scaring away the rest of the game while getting his daily food.

He wandered away into the hills for some hours, and had grown faint and weary with want of food, when he spied a pair of mountain sheep on the summit of a crag not far off, staring down at him in the way peculiar to animals that

have never been hunted and do not know the meaning of a gun.

It was a long shot, too long for the bow; but he could not afford to wait for a better chance. Raising his rifle to his shoulder, and taking the risk of disturbing the game, for once, he had the satisfaction of dropping the male in his tracks, and it came tumbling down the rocks to his feet, while the female stood staring at him, as if she did not know what was the meaning of the sudden departure of her mate.

Hastily ramming down a fresh cartridge, Louis shot her in the same way as he had done with the male, and was about to skin the animals, when he was startled by the sound of another shot, not far off, and the next minute the whizz of a bullet by his ear showed him that his foes were by no means dead yet.

To get under cover was his first instinct.

CHAPTER XIV.

JIM BARNES'S LUCK.

THE shot had come from above, and the first action of the young man was to run to the opposite side of the valley and take shelter behind a projecting rock, which he thought would shelter him from further attentions.

Who his unknown assailant could be he knew not yet, but he suspected it must be some one from the camp at Dog-Town.

Who else would fire at him at all?

Cogitating over the problem and keeping a sharp lookout for the other side of the valley, he waited in silence.

He was in the same predicament in which he had once before placed his opponents, when they were in the open and he had been on the top of the rocks. There was no way in which he could reach a place of safety without exposing himself to the fire of his unseen foes.

There was nothing to do but to wait for further developments, and he crouched down in the shadow of the rock, and watched the opposite side carefully.

He had the advantage of knowing the country well, for he had spent much time in going over the mountains, in the few places where they were accessible, and he knew that there was one place only, on the opposite side of the valley, by which a man could approach the edge of the cliff, near enough to fire the shot that had barely escaped him.

That spot he watched, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing the head of a man carefully protruded over the edge of the rocks.

The distance was so short that he could see the face plainly, and recognized the head of Jim Barnes, the very man who had warned him against going to Dog-Town.

Jim's rifle was pushed out over the edge of the precipice, and Jim was gazing keenly at the very place where Louis was concealed.

Whether he was seen or not, the young man was not certain, for he was in a deep shadow, while the sun was shining full on Jim.

He resolved to put the matter to the test by a very common experiment.

Shrinking further back in the shadow, he put out his cap on the end of his rifle, and saw Jim level his own rifle at once. The distant marksman came out into fuller view as Louis moved the cap stealthily forward, as if he were advancing his head round the corner of the rock.

Then came a crack, and the cap was sent flying. Louis managed to keep control of it so far that he let it fall, as if the wearer had dropped inside his shelter; and almost instantly Jim made his appearance at the top of the rock, in full view, with a yell of triumph, and began to dance about.

Louis was sorely tempted to fire at him; but he refrained, wishing a closer chance, and was soon rewarded for his forbearance.

Jim Barnes, without even taking the precaution to reload his empty rifle, began to descend the rocks in full view, and scrambled down the steep descent in a way that Louis knew must incapacitate him from accurate shooting, when he got to the bottom.

The young man watched him closely as he came, and noticed that he did not reload the rifle, though it was a breech-loader.

He came running heedlessly across the valley to the spot where the cap lay, and it was not till he was within a few feet of the place that Louis suddenly sprang up, with his rifle pointed straight at Jim, and shouted:

"Throw up your hands!"

But he had not counted on the desperate courage of the man opposed to him. Instead of obeying the order, Jim uttered a furious curse, and leveled his own rifle, with a rapidity that Louis had not looked for. He even pulled the trigger, before the young man could fire.

But the empty click of the lock told the tale that the old Forty-Niner had been too quick for his own safety, and Louis, with a self-command that came of his nature, repeated the order:

"Throw up your hands. I don't want to kill you."

But even then Jim would not surrender. With another curse, more venomous than the last, he clubbed the empty rifle and made a rush at Louis, who at last fired right into his breast, and down fell Jim, with a cry of agony wrung from him by the shock of a rifle-bullet through

the middle of his breast, making a clean hole from front to rear.

Louis Badeau threw aside his rifle, went to the fallen man, and raised the head of Jim on his arm, saying:

"I couldn't help it, indeed I couldn't. I beg your pardon, but you would have killed me if I had not done it; wouldn't you?"

Jim looked up at him with an air of astonishment, struggling with the pain in which he was, as he tried to say something, and then made a motion to his mouth, which the young man understood. He laid Jim's head back, and ran to the little stream which trickled from the rocks, near where they were.

Hastily he drew from his pouch a hunting-cup, which he had brought with him from the East, a gift from a fond mother; filled it with water, and held it to Jim's lips.

The wounded man drank eagerly and then seemed to be revived; for he said, in a low, hoarse tone:

"You're a white man; you air. Thankee."

Louis looked round him for a moment, and then said:

"If you will wait here I will go and get the barrow—"

"It ain't hyar," interrupted Jim faintly. "It's in Dorg-Taown. You furgit."

Louis, without another word, stooped down and took the wounded man in his arms, till he had supported him into a standing position.

"Will you try to walk a bit?" he said. "And if you get weak, I will try to carry you. You are pretty heavy; but I am pretty strong."

Jim Barnes, once put on his feet, seemed to be so far revived that he was able to take a few steps. The first shock had worn off, and as he was a man of remarkable strength, the loss of blood had not yet sapped his body, so as to make him incapable of movement.

Leaning on Louis, and occasionally carried by the young man, he was able to stagger into the next valley below, where they found a place where Louis thought he could make a camp in a new position, with advantage to himself.

Here he laid Jim, with his back leaning against a rock, and started off down the course of the stream, to the camp where he had set up his tent, and where, as he had told Charley Jones, he had already exhausted the washings.

There was a pool in the valley where he had left Jim, which he had not yet examined, and which he thought might contain some gold.

It was the work of an hour and more to get his traps down to the new camp; but the task was accomplished at last, and then he devoted his attention to Jim.

He had no expectation of finding the miner alive when he came back; but he found Jim still seated, with his back against the rock; and as the Forty-Niner saw him he smiled faintly and murmured in a low voice:

"Reekin' I'm a-gwine to croak, pard; but, all the same, you're a white man."

Louis looked at him carefully, and examined the wound made by the shot. To his surprise and gratification, the blood had ceased to stream from the orifices, back and front, and he said cheerfully:

"I don't think you are going to die this time, my friend. The bleeding has stopped, and you don't look weak."

Jim looked up at him in surprise, as he asked:

"Air you a doctor, then, pard?"

"No, I am not a doctor, but I have seen a good many doctors at work, and I know a wound like yours when I see it. If you will do as I tell you, I don't see why you should not get well."

Jim smiled faintly.

"I'll do it, pard—but say—"

"Well, what is it?" asked Louis, as the other appeared to hesitate a moment.

"What puzzles me," said Jim, in the same faint tone, with the smile on his face, "is, why in thunder you want to git me well. I hain't showed ye I war yer fri'nd, did I?"

Louis smiled back at him, as he answered:

"That is my business. Perhaps I want to make a friend of you."

"Ye can't do it," said Jim, feebly. "Ez soon ez I git up, I'll be ready to go fur ye ag'in. Ye tuck my weepins, and I'm bound to git squar' with the man that does that."

Louis shrugged his shoulders.

"If that is all your trouble, I can give you the weapons back. I don't want them now. I can buy better ones elsewhere."

Jim shook his head.

"Ye can't do it, pard. They ain't to be beat in Frisco. That ere rifle's the best in Dorg-Taown, and ef I'd 'a' had it when I come gunnin' fur you, it ain't hyar I'd be lyin'."

"At all events," said Louis, sharply, "you've got to do one of two things now, hold your tongue, or die here alone. Do you want to live?"

"In coorse I do," said Jim, feebly.

"Then hold your tongue, and let me take care of you," said Louis; and with that he proceeded to dispose the tent so as to screen the wounded man from the sun, while he made a bed for him of his own blankets, softer than Jim had ever known in the West.

He set up stakes in the earth, and made a frame on which he stretched the blankets, so

that the body of the person lying in the improvised cot would not touch the ground.

Then he placed Jim on the bed, and left him there, after dressing his wounds with a strip of linen, torn from the only white shirt he had in the world.

The wounded man now seemed to be sleepy from exhaustion, and Louis let him sleep while he set to work at his mountain sheep, and finished skinning them and disposing of the meat, out of the way of predatory wildcats.

He took from his belongings a little saucepan, and made broth for the patient, before he ate anything himself; then hastily cooked a few streaks and satisfied his appetite, before Jim woke up.

He took care of the patient as gently as if he had been a woman, fed him with broth—for Jim was already too weak to help himself—and had the satisfaction of seeing him fall asleep after his first food.

Then Louis went to his work at the pool in the middle of the little valley, and before it was sunset, had succeeded in getting out of that pool several nuggets, of so rich a character, that the golden visions, which had dazzled him, when first he set out prospecting, began to come back again to him, and he calculated that, with the gold he had already secreted in various hiding-places, he would have enough, in another week of similar luck, to take his leave of the diggings forever, and go back to his native place, to see the mother for whose sake he had come so far already.

It was while busy with these golden visions, that he was startled by the sound of voices in the gulch below him, and hastily took his arms and ran to the tent, where he told Jim, who had waked up:

"Here come your friends again. I must take care of myself. They will not harm you, I suppose."

With that he went off and climbed the rocks, just in time to escape the sight of a party of miners, who came into the valley, headed by the redoubtable Colonel Vandervoort, armed to the teeth and looking about for something to hurt.

They spied the tent at once and fired a volley into it, without asking any questions; then rushed forward and surrounded it, shouting:

"We're got him now!"

CHAPTER XV.

HUNTED DOWN.

LOUIS had already reached a hiding-place when the miners fired at the tent, and he saw them rush there and tear down the flimsy canvas erection in the same way they had done before when they paid him a visit.

It was within a short time of sunset when they came, and there was only enough light for him to distinguish their forms without recognizing faces, but he saw them tear down the tent, and then heard their exclamations of wonder as they found the wounded man inside and made out who it was.

He could not be certain what was the effect of the discovery on them, but they were silent after the first yell, and he saw them clustered round the bedside of Jim Barnes, from which he judged that they must be discussing the case.

The darkness came on and fell over the valley, and still he did not hear anything; but about an hour after sunset a big fire was lighted in front of the place where the tent had stood, and he saw that the men, by its light, had made a sort of litter, and that they were carrying Jim Barnes down the valley with them.

This reassured him, for he had no idea that they could cherish any sentiments of vengeance against him after the way he had treated Jim when he had him in his power.

But as the men moved off down the valley the fire grew brighter, and he saw by its light that the miners had left behind them something white like a placard in a conspicuous position on the face of the rock.

It made him think that it was something in the nature of a notice, and he was curious to see what it was.

He had no notion, however, of going down to read it till he was sure that he ran no danger; and as long as the night remained, there was danger in venturing down from his safe perch.

He finally concluded to stay where he was till morning, and made shift to pass the night as comfortably as he could, though the air was cold and he had no blankets with him.

He used his knife to cut down some scrubby little fir bushes, and covered himself up with the green twigs and branches as well as he could, securing some warmth by the expedient; but it was cold and frosty up there, and he did not dare to light a fire to warm himself.

The night passed in alternate dozing and shivering, and when morning came he woke early.

His first glance was down into the vale where he had left his tent, the night before.

There was nothing at all there.

Everything, in the place where it had been, was gone; and the black heap of smoldering embers of the fire in front showed what had been done with it.

The miners, to get square with him, had

burned every scrap of property he had in the world, and he was left without even a blanket. He had but the clothes he stood in, and the rifle and pistols he had taken from Jim Barnes.

But there against the face of the rock, was the white placard he had seen the night before; and now that the light of day was on it, he saw that it was a notification of some kind.

But he was too cautious to descend at once and read it, as he doubted not, the men who put it there wanted him to do.

He had first to see if there was any plot to get him within gunshot of any one.

He knew the way to get round, by coasting the top of the precipice, and he was not satisfied to descend till he had gone clear round and seen into the next valley.

He became convinced that no one was hiding near him, and finally went down to read the notice, which was all that was left of the visit of the miners, the night before.

When he got in front of the placard, he found it made of a piece of cloth of his tent, cut out with a bowie knife, with the following inscription, written with the point of a brand from the fire that had been extinguished, so as to make a black mark.

"GIT OUTER THIS OR YOUL BE SORY."

The spelling was phonetic, but the sentiment was, beyond doubt, genuine, and the young man was convinced that the writers thereof meant what they said.

They meant to warn him to leave the place, and they intimated that they were coming back to pay him another visit, if he did not do as they wanted.

Then, as he looked round at the embers of the fire, saw the consumed fragments of his late possessions, and the wanton way in which they had been destroyed, he set his teeth, and said to himself aloud:

"No, by heavens, I won't go, now, and I'll make some of you sorry you came here."

Then he went over to the place where the remnants of the two carcasses he had skinned, the day before, were lying.

It was but the refuse fragments he had thrown away when he brought the best parts to the tent and hung them up.

The vandals who had visited his tent had carried off or destroyed what he had left there, but they had not noticed, in the dark, the offal-heap beyond, where the fleeces of the two sheep lay; and there was enough meat left still to give the forlorn mountain dweller another meal. He was not too proud, that morning, to take the heart and liver and kidneys of the sheep, and when he had made his breakfast, he took the skins of the animals with him, and climbed to his eyrie on the rocks above, where he hid them in a cleft, resolved that he would have something to keep him warm, next night, at all events.

He was none too soon in doing this; for, as he had anticipated from the tenor of the notice, he soon heard the voices of men echoing in the rare atmosphere of the mountains, showing that the miners were coming on his track again.

From his place on the rocks above, he saw them coming up the next valley below him, and that they were much more numerous than they had been before.

There were at least forty men in the party, and he saw that some of them began to climb the rocks, so as to give him no more of the advantage he had had before, in his elevated position.

That the men, as they attained the higher elevation, saw him, he soon found out, and he took his way from them to the higher passes and peaks of the range, keeping in advance and out of gunshot.

His appearance was the signal for a yell of triumph, and the men in the valley below came running after his trail, while the men on the upper level made the best of their way toward him. It was no longer a question of a few; but the whole population of Dog-Town was after him, eager for his blood.

He could not tell the reason, but he felt that it was the case, from the vindictive way they began to fire after him, before they came within gunshot.

The bullets came dropping on the rocks near him, with a bad aim, it is true, and spent before they got to him; but he took it as a warning that, if the men got within gunshot of him, they would show him no mercy.

With a new sense of danger at his heart, he pursued his flight till he came to the entrance to a new valley, on a higher range, where he at last lost sight of his pursuers.

Here he paused to rest a little.

He had come to a place where he had a sort of natural fortification, from whence he could command all approaches, for the space of some three hundred yards.

The valley to which he had come was about that width, and he was on the further side, and commanded a view of the other end and all the approaches.

His body was sheltered behind a low rock, that formed a perfect natural breastwork, and he set his teeth as he said to himself:

"I have gone far enough; I am going to stay for a while, now."

He had not long to wait either; for the head of a man soon appeared at the rocks on the other side of the valley, and the man peered round, as if looking for him, before he ventured his whole body into full view.

Louis leveled his rifle, as the other made his appearance; and steadied the weapon over the top of the breastwork.

Then the man turned to beckon some one behind him, and Louis fired.

The echo of the shot made a tremendous noise in the mountain, and he saw the man at whom he had fired stagger a moment and then fall, when a second man made his appearance beside the first, and he recognized Colonel Vandervoort.

The colonel saw the little puff of smoke, which had not yet lifted, for there was no wind in the mountains at the moment.

And Vandervoort, being an old hand at that sort of work, immediately sought shelter and got it, before Louis could get his rifle reloaded, short as that operation was.

Then the young man realized that his time of real danger had come at last; for the colonel was in the same position as himself, and neither could move without the other having the advantage, while Louis had counted six or seven men on the mountain when he had looked back, before he hid himself.

He could not stay long where he was—that was certain—and with that he tried the old trick, which had proved successful with Jim Barnes, by shoving out his cap on the end of a wiping rod.

But the colonel did not bite at the bait, and the next instant the form of another man came over the ridge, when Louis changed his aim and shot the stranger down, without any warning.

The smoke was yet hanging over him, when Colonel Vandervoort fired, and the bullet slightly grazed the head of Louis Badeau.

The shock made him dizzy for a moment, and he hardly knew what he was doing; but in the instinct he had lately acquired, he drew another cartridge from his pocket as he dropped.

The dizzy sensation wore off in a few seconds, under the influence of intense anxiety, and his head cleared.

He hardly remembered where he was, or what had happened, but he saw the cartridge in his hand, and made shift to shove it into the breech of the rifle that had dropped on the ground beside him as he fell.

Then, in the same instinctive way, he drew a cap from the pouch in the belt he had taken from Jim Barnes, and capped the piece.

Without remembering where he was, but with a vague idea of danger, he put up his head, and saw that Colonel Vandervoort and another man were scrambling over the rocks toward him, while two more were on the opposite side of the valley.

The moment his head made its appearance, two shots were fired at him, but with so much haste that neither hit him, though the splinters of rock were dashed into his face.

Then he saw the colonel stop in his tracks with the other man, and level his rifle to fire.

How he managed to do what he then did, he never could tell in after years; but it seemed as if his senses had become sharpened into lightning quickness at that moment.

He waited till the flash of both pieces came, when he dropped just in time to escape the shots. Both passed above his head, and the next minute he was up again, and leveling his rifle at the colonel, who was coming on as fast as he could, with the other man, in the evident hope of rushing in, before the fugitive could fire.

Louis held his piece steady for several seconds, during which the colonel came nearer and nearer.

When he fired at last, Vandervoort went down all in a heap; but the other man had drawn his revolver, and was shooting as he came.

Louis heard the whistle of the bullets past his head, but he saw that the man was excited and firing wild.

His own coolness seemed unshaken at the moment, and he drew his pistol from his belt and waited. Presently he had counted five shots that the other had fired, and his assailant halted, as if convinced that he was throwing away his chances.

Then Louis leveled his pistol as he knelt behind the rock, and rested the weapon on the hard stone to fire, while the other man tried to keep his own weapon steady.

"Crack! Crack!"

Both weapons went off simultaneously, but with different effect.

Louis Badeau's assailant dropped, while Louis felt a sharp sting in his left shoulder, as the bullet from his enemy's pistol grazed the flesh, drawing blood, but doing little damage.

The next minute came two flashes from the other side of the valley, and the young man's cap was knocked off his head, while a bullet went through his loose coat, but failed to draw blood.

His blood now fully up, Louis uttered a defiant shout, shook his rifle, and turned to run.

As he went, a third shot came after him, but it was only from a pistol, and fell short.

In another moment he was safe behind the crest of the ridge, and dashed into a narrow winding pass between two perpendicular walls of rock, the turning of which placed him in safety from any foe, save one who should follow him at less than fifty yards' distance.

Through this passage he dashed, till it opened into another valley, much broader than the first, when he paused for an instant.

If he could cross this valley before his pursuers could get in view, he would be comparatively safe; but if he were caught in the open, he would be lost. To stay where he was, would be to invite overwhelming numbers to come on him.

He took his decision at once, to run the risk, and dashed down into the valley.

He was a swift runner, and had crossed more than half the distance, when he heard a yell in his rear, and the bullets began to patter round him. There was no time to lose, and he ran on faster than before, dodging from side to side. More than once his clothing was torn, but he managed to get to the other side and behind some rocks, without receiving a wound that disabled him.

Once there he stopped and reloaded all the empty chambers of his little battery, watching the enemy keenly.

He was safe from them for the present, and knew they would not dare to cross the valley in his front. He had a chance to rest at last.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NEW ALLY.

LOUIS BADEAU'S foes hesitated to advance till they should acquire sufficient numbers to make a rush and overwhelm him, so that he had time to get his breath and collect his senses.

He had got into a part of the mountains where he had never been before, and knew not whether there was a chance for the men in the lower range to get in his rear.

He had come on a much higher level than he had previously occupied, and the absence of water, with much greater cold, showed him that he had attained a high where the snow lay for a good portion of the year.

In fact, by looking up behind him, he could see the snow-banks not very far above him, and knew that, if he could get among them, he would be safe from pursuit, for the miners would be apt to give up the chase.

It was while in this dilemma, not knowing whether to advance or retreat, that he saw a figure come out from the group of his foes at the other side of the valley, and, to his intense surprise, recognized the form of a woman.

He had never seen Juanita before, but knew in a moment that it could be no one else.

She was dressed in semi-masculine costume, with a short skirt that did not impede her movements, and she carried the same arms as the rest—a rifle at her back and pistols at her belt.

That she had not brought the rifle forward, and that her hands were empty, showed that she had no hostile intention, or that she was acting as a shield for the rest. For a moment Louis hesitated what to do.

He could not shoot at a woman, and yet the warning of Charley Jones came to him, in which he was told to "beware of Juanita."

Here she was coming, and he did not know exactly what to do.

While he was hesitating, the woman continued to advance till she was in the center of the open space in the valley, when Louis called out: "Stop where you are!"

He noticed that the men on the other side were getting up from their cover, as if they were trying to charge, and he suspected that the errand of the woman was simply to cover them.

Juanita halted at the summons and called back:

"I'm a friend. Don't fire at me."

"If you are a friend, keep back," cried Louis, in the same stern tone. "Your friends over there are getting up a rush."

The girl turned her head and looked back.

She, too, saw the men getting up and mustering their forces for the attack, and she seemed to be undecided what to do.

Louis called out again:

"Go back, or I shall have to fire at you. I know no women here."

The woman appeared to have made up her mind at last, for she turned and held her hands up, crying, as she did it:

"Fire away, then. I am a friend, and if you kill me, it will be a shame to you for the rest of your life. I am coming in."

And she marched on as before.

The men on the other side of the valley now came out of their hiding-places and opened a fire with their rifles at Louis, shooting over the head of Juanita, while Louis, who did not yet like to fire at a woman, hesitated, and Juanita continued to run on, as fast as she could.

At last he leveled his rifle at the boldest of the men on the other side of the valley, who had come out without shelter, and was taking aim at him.

The flash and report came, and he saw the man throw up his hands and fall.

Juanita uttered a shrill cry that sounded like exultation, and rushed on.

In another moment she was close beside him, her weapons still undrawn, and she said to him, in a quiet, earnest way:

"You did well not to fire at me, sir. I am your best friend. I have come to help you take care of those cowards over there, who are chasing you for nothing. Will you take my help, or shall I go back?"

He turned to look at her face, and caught, for the first time in his life, the glance of those dark eyes, that had set so many men wild in their time. But his cool temperament, further cooled by his abstemious life in the mountains and by a feeling of which the woman had no idea, enabled him to say coldly:

"If you please. But I fear that you are making enemies for nothing. You had better go back to those men, from whom you came."

For a moment she looked angry; but then a smile illumined her face, as she observed:

"You do not trust me yet. You shall see in a minute whether I am to be trusted."

So saying, she unslung her rifle and leveled it over the rock beside him.

One of the miners, bolder than the rest, was coming out of his shelter as she spoke, and Louis saw her fire and saw the man drop.

There was a yell from the other side of the valley and a great rush of men followed, as if they had determined to avenge the death of their comrades at any hazard.

"You fire while I load," said Juanita, coolly. "We can keep them back for a month, at this rate."

Louis obeyed the injunction, and shot down the leader of the rush, while Juanita was recharging her breech-loading rifle.

From that moment the shots came, first from one, then the other, so fast that the rush was checked, and the miners ran back to cover, two of them limping, the third holding his left arm in his right hand, as if wounded.

Then Juanita turned to Louis, with the glance of her dark eyes that had cost so many men all they had in the world, as she said:

"I told you we could send them back. They won't try you again, now I have fooled them. They were getting disgusted before I left them. Do you know where you are?"

Louis looked round him and up at the snow-line.

"I don't," he said, frankly; "but one thing I am sure of, that no one can get above us now, and that they must come across the valley to get at us in front."

"They will never dare to do that, after the lesson you have given them. I have heard a great deal of you, sir."

Her eyes were on him as she spoke, and she smiled in her most bewitching way.

Louis did not look at her; perhaps he did not dare; for he was but human, and the eyes of the strange girl were of the kind that clouds the judgment of most men. But he answered:

"I am much obliged to you for your assistance. Had you not helped me, there is no telling if they would not have crossed the open and got in on us."

Juanita did not seem to heed what he said, but she pursued, in the same way as before:

"I have heard a great deal about you before. Charley Jones told me. You know him, of course?"

"He is the only man who stood my friend in the whole of that settlement of savages," said Louis, gratefully. "I shall never forget his kindness to me."

"Nor mine, I hope," the girl said, softly.

Louis turned his head, without thinking, and caught her eyes, fixed on his, with the same bewildering expression she had shown before. They confused his judgment so that he stammered as he replied:

"Of course not—that is—I mean—you have been very kind also; but I don't quite understand why you came here after me."

She laughed carelessly as she replied:

"Well, you know, we women are very curious. I heard of you, at first, as up in the mountains; and the boys were going after you. I thought nothing about it till they brought Jim Barnes home, the first night, when you laid out him and Vandervoort. You know they called them both pretty good men. Then I began to think I would like to see what sort of a fellow you were. And then Jim Barnes went out again and did not come back; so the boys set out to find him. I went with them last night, and the first thing they did was to fire into your tent. I thought that a pretty small business, when they were twenty to one, and I told them so; but they did it, and when we went into the tent we found they had nearly killed Jim with their shots."

"I thought they would do it," exclaimed Louis indignantly. "Did they kill him?"

"Not quite; but one of the bullets hit him, and there is not much chance for his life. That made me mad; but they laid it all on you and swore that you must have done it."

"And what did Jim say?" asked Louis.

"Said nothing, poor fellow. How could he, when he was as near dead as any man I ever saw? But they took him off, burned all your things to spite you, and then made out to come after you in the morning and catch you, if they

could. I came along to see fair play, and you know the rest. They thought I was going forward to try and draw you out, and they were not ashamed to let a woman go first. But I fooled them, and now, I suppose, they will be down on me, when I get back among them. But I am not going there."

Then she suddenly added, with a great deal more vivacity than she had shown so far:

"So you see we are thrown together for a time, and the question is, where shall we go?"

Louis hesitated.

"I know where to go myself, but I don't know what to do with you."

Juanita looked at him in a peculiar way.

"What do you mean? I can go where you can."

Louis colored deeply.

"I don't think so. It would not be right to take advantage of your generosity to compromise your reputation. The sooner we part, the better for you."

She tossed her head with a scornful gesture.

"I can take care of myself. If you refuse my friendship, I shall think you mean to be rude, and I never forgave a rudeness, sir."

Louis hesitated still more, but finally said:

"I do not refuse anything, but I think you will see that you and I cannot travel together, without attracting notice to us both. If you choose to stay here, you can do so; but I must go away."

So saying he took his rifle and left her alone behind the rock, while he began to climb the slope.

No sooner did he make his appearance than the shots began to patter round him, from the other side of the valley; but he continued his ascent and reached the top uninjured.

Then he turned round and saw that the miners were preparing for another rush, while the girl below him had leveled her rifle, and was firing at them with a rapidity that showed her no mean shot. He waited long enough to see the rush checked, and then crossed the ridge and plunged into a maze of passes, near the snow line of the mountains, which he followed, till the waning light warned him that he must seek shelter for the night.

Just as he was looking about for some place in which a fire might be safe, he saw the figure of an Indian on the slope opposite to him, and the man made the signal of amity, which he answered at once.

Half an hour later, he was in the camp of a small band of Digger Indians, in the midst of which his old friend Jim was conspicuous, with Whiskey Charley and their comrades.

Louis was hungry and tired, and was very glad to accept the hospitality which they offered him, with a heartiness about which there was no doubt. All the Indians appeared to have heard of him, and to know him as a friend, though it puzzled him why this should be so.

The real secret seemed to be that he was able to talk the sign language, and thus had a link of association with these poor creatures, who, in their degradation and poverty, are very different from the proud Indians of the plains, who ride on horseback.

They told him to have no fears, for they would see that no one came near the camp during the night, and he went to sleep among them, wrapped in a rug of skins, warmer than he had been for some time.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHANGING DIGGINGS.

Two months passed away over the classic precincts of Dog-Town, and the Eureka House was in full blast, when there was a disturbance in camp, on account of the fact that the rivulet which supplied the place with water was beginning to run less and less every day, till it finally failed altogether.

The dry season was almost at an end, it was true, and the annual rains were almost due; but in the mean time the water had got to be so low that there was serious apprehension a famine would ensue.

The rivulet was reduced to a chain of stagnant pools, which in turn began to dry up, till, at last, the nearest water to be got was a mile from the settlement, and the problem to be solved was how to live till the rains came on again.

The absence of water in the bed of the stream was an advantage to the diggers, because it gave them the whole bottom of the bed to work in; but the washings were difficult, and, the deeper the men dug in the ground, the less gold they found.

In fact, it soon became evident to those who still clung to the diggings, that they were fast becoming exhausted, and the next question was where they should move to.

Charley Jones was the first man to leave the place, and he disappeared, one day, without taking leave of his friends, while no one had seen Juanita, since the day she had played them false in the mountains.

Then came the departure of Brimstone Jack and Barney O'Toole, while, one after the other, the miners took their packs and made tracks for other quarters, till the once flourishing settlement of Dog-Town was reduced to a few

tents, high up the valley, near the remnant of the water, while the Eureka House was shut up, and the Boggs family departed to more prosperous places.

Dog-Town was added to the long list of abandoned diggings, and the place became a desert, save for a few miners, who clung to it, more from inability to go anywhere else than from faith in its revival.

Among those who staid were two friends, who inhabited a small hut, near the only pool that held out.

They were both old Forty-Niners, and used to sticking to their work, as long as there was any chance at all. One of them was Jim Barnes, the other Colonel Vandervoort.

Jim was still alive, and the strength of his constitution was triumphing over a wound that would have killed most men.

He had almost recovered from the bullet, which had penetrated his chest and come out at the middle of his back; while the second shot, which the miners fired into the tent, thinking to catch Louis Badeau, had inflicted but a slight wound, though it had had a double effect when it struck him, on account of his weakness.

The colonel, who had only been stunned by the bullet of Louis Badeau, during the hunting of that youth, had stuck to his friend when he got back to Dog-Town, and had nursed him as tenderly as a woman ever since that time, though he had been sorely put to it to live, since the miners had left the place and the Eureka House had been abandoned.

The change had come suddenly; for the miners had heard of new diggings, discovered at a place called Dead Man's Gulch, whose inhabitants had been the objects of their mingled scorn and dislike, before the great find had been made there. The Dead Man's Gulchers had always had a jealousy of the Dog-Towners, and the latter had reciprocated it; for no one had ever imagined that Dead Man's Gulch would ever prove much of a placer; but, as soon as the news was confirmed, the rush of the miners began, and the proprietor of the Eureka House had been among the first to leave, when he heard that there was but one tavern at the new placer.

Dog-Town was deserted, and the only means of subsistence left to the few who remained there was the stuff left behind by the miners and the owner of the Eureka House, for want of transportation.

This was enough, in the way of salt pork and flour, to subsist two men for a considerable time; and the colonel, who would not leave his old partner, had a melancholy satisfaction in cooking all that there was to be cooked, and seeing Jim slowly recovering; while the two, for amusement, spent their spare time in playing poker for the little dust they had left, and winning the same money back and forth, as fast as one took the pile from the other, for there was no envy between them on the subject of final ownership.

But even poker palls on the taste of the most inveterate gambler, when there is no more money to play for and the loser has to borrow of the winner, more than twice in succession; and the time came when Jim Barnes, one day, said to the colonel:

"Cunnel, Dog-Town's played aout."

The colonel nodded sadly as he responded:

"Reckon it is, Jim; but what are ye gwine to do about it?"

"Waal," said Jim, reflectively, "reckin the best thing we kin do is to light aout."

The colonel had had the same thought in his own head for some time, but had hesitated in giving it expression, for fear his friend was not in condition to move, so he answered readily:

"Well, Jim, if ye feel that way I'm agreeable, but air ye fit to git up and git? Ye hain't got so strong ye kin tramp fur, have ye?"

The colonel, since he had been alone with Jim, and deprived of cultivated society, had lapsed into more provincialisms of speech than usual, and spoke more and more like the rest of the miners, every day.

Jim, when he made the observation he had, was seated at the foot of one of the trees by the bank of the stream—the very clump in which Louis Badeau had pitched his camp, when he first entered Dog-Town.

He rose now and stretched his arms and legs, as if to feel his strength, as he said:

"Cunnel, I'm worth a dozen dead men yet; and ef the rest of the boys kin git to Dead Man's Gulch, I kin."

The colonel was much relieved to find his friend of this opinion, for he had been becoming more and more convinced, as the season wore on, that Dog-Town was exhausted as a placer, and that, to stay there for the coming winter, was to invite starvation.

"When shall we go, Jim?" he asked, and Jim said at once:

"The sooner the better, cunnel. We got that ere wheelbarrow, and we kin put aour stuff in it, and make a tramp, the same as the rest."

The wheelbarrow he referred to was the same with which Louis Badeau had come into the settlement, and the colonel could not help saying:

"Darned queer we should have to take that, ain't it, Jim, arter what we did to the owner?"

Jim nodded gravely, as he replied:

"That's true as gospel, cunnel. But I want to take it, if it's only to see the man that owned it, and give it him back. He had me whar he coud lay treated me like a nigger, and he were a white man, every time. Cunnel, it's my opinion that ore stranger, whether he's a Injun or not, behaved like a white man; and ef I meet him, I'm gwine to tell him so."

The colonel made no answer for a moment; for he seemed to be thinking about something. When he at last spoke, he said:

"Well, Jim, that's as may be; but I owe him a bad turn, after all. He got me foul, and I'm bound to get square with him for it."

"Why, what did he do to you?" asked Jim, in surprise.

"He had a chance to shoot me like a man, and he didn't take it," said Vandervoort in a reflective way. "Instead of that, he sent a shot at me that grazed my head and knocked me stupid. He made a fool of me, before all the boys, and I'm not the man to stand that, Jim. No; if he and I meet, we've got to fight that thing aout."

Jim smiled slightly.

"Then he didn't kill ye, when he had a chance? Don't see much to git mad about in that, cunnel."

Vandervoort scowled deeply as he retorted:

"If he'd shot me, as he did you, I wouldn't be set on what I'm going to do; but when a man gets a chance to kill another, and only creases him, just as if he was a ten dollar broncho, I'm not the man to stand that. Jim, you kin do what you want; but whenever I meet that man, he and I have got to have it aout."

The other miner favored his companion with a peculiar look, as he said:

"Waal, cunnel, I can't blame ye; fur I felt the same myself once; but sence I've ben daown, I've ben doin' a heap of thinkin'. Ef you try it, and want to git wiped aout, so bad, you ain't gwine to have no help from me, no more."

"I don't want it, Jim," said the colonel earnestly. "This ain't your fight. It's mine; and no other man's; but its got to come. I ain't saying I'll git the best of it nuther; but when a man treats me with contempt, and as good as says I am not worth the killing, I'm not the man to be your friend, and take it quietly."

Jim seemed to understand the feeling entirely, for he expressed no disapprobation; but only remarked:

"Waal, cunnel, I reckon the man kin take keer of himself, and so kin you."

Then he went to the hut they had been occupying for the last few weeks, and proceeded to pack up his belongings, in the very wheelbarrow in which the colonel had once brought him back to the valley, after his first defeat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEAD MAN'S GULCH.

DEAD MAN'S GULCH, in spite of its ominous name, was by no means an unprosperous place in the spring and summer; and, since the rush of miners to the diggings, it had a large population of its own.

The original proprietor of the Eureka House at Dog-Town had set up a house by the same name in the new locality, and was driving a rushing trade, while his rival, who had been there before him, and kept a place bearing the euphonious name of "The Siesta," was losing ground daily, from not having a barkeeper who could compound drinks as skillfully as Bill of the Eureka, whose reputation had gone through the length and breadth of the mining-districts, and who deserved every good epithet bestowed on him.

The new Eureka was a counterpart of the old one, as far as regarded the bar, though its accommodations for boarders were not so large as they had been at Dog-Town, and a good many of the miners had to be content to sleep in a row of tents that the provident landlord had erected near the house.

The only regular boarder in the new place was Charley Jones, who had set up a little bank of his own in one of the rooms of the new house, where he dispensed the delights of faro to any one who was willing to try his luck, which most of the men were only too ready to do as soon as the day's work yielded more than enough to support life at the rates at which provisions and lodgings were going in the diggings.

But the crowning glory of Dead Man's Gulch, and one in which it distanced all competitors, was the fact that it had a hall, in which there were seats for spectators and a regular stage, on which companies of strolling players occasionally enacted scenes from the legitimate dramatists and others, which delighted the miners hugely, in exact proportion to the loudness of voice of the male performers and the shortness of skirts of the feminine part of the company.

And there were not wanting companies who came; for the quantity of money in the various placer diggings was a tempting bait for any manager who found himself in that vicinity. The price of tickets being put at five dollars for general admission, while the front seats fetched twice that amount, the harvest was rich enough to encourage the laborers.

To be sure, they had rather a hard time of it; for the miners, if they were enthusiastic in praise were no less pronounced in their dislike. If some unlucky wight in the company failed to come up to their standard of histrionic talent.

But, where they had a performer, they had an understandable way of showing their appreciation in a substantial form, by throwing pieces of gold on the stage; through, if the actor who received them were a nigger, he had a fair chance of being struck, with enough force to knock him down, if he failed to dodge the flying gifts.

Ladies were less roughly treated; for the miners were nothing if not chivalrous, and they saw too few women, especially ladies, to allow them to be rough in their treatment of the fair sex.

A strong instance of this was seen when the Dog-Towners came into Dead Man's Gulch, and found Juanita, who had deceived them in their chase of Louis Badeau, established in the rival community, plying her vocation of gambling, as coolly as if she had never been anywhere else.

A good many of them felt bitterly toward her, but not one offered to insult or hurt her; and Juanita went on the even tenor of her way, as if she had never seen a Dog-Town miner in her life.

But the man whom every one of the Dog-Towners expected to see was not there; and Louis Badeau seemed to have disappeared from the mining regions, as completely as if he had never entered them.

This was a source of no little gratification to the Dog-Towners; for they had made up their minds that the stranger would go to Dead Man's Gulch before them, and get his story in ahead of theirs, so as to secure the support of the "Gulchers," who had had no great love for them at the best of times. So they began to tell their own tales of the mean way in which the stranger had treated them, and the way in which, as they put it, he had taken unfair advantage of the boys, "who only wanted to have a little fun at his expense," and showed himself "a man who could not take a joke."

And the tales they told had their effect in Dead Man's Gulch; for the miners there were of the same rough class that prevailed throughout the diggings, believers in physical strength and horse-play, with the smallest sense of personal dignity consistent with courage.

They were ready, in case the stranger who had come to Dog-Town should come to their own place, to play him all and more than the tricks he had been played in Dog-Town.

But, as the time went on, and the dry season was replaced by the rains of winter—for there is but little snow and hardly any cold in the mining regions in which Dead Man's Gulch is situated—the remembrance of Louis Badeau faded away, as he did not make his appearance.

The original Gulchers had forgotten all the tales they had been told about him, and the place had settled into the usual monotony of the rainy season, when one morning a wagon came into the diggings, driven by an Indian, who was dressed in decent clothes, and had the appearance of being civilized, as far as an Indian can be.

The wagon was followed by two men on horseback, well armed and mounted; and, in the leader and owner of the whole equipage, the "Dog-Towner" portion of the population recognized the very man who had defied them all in their own town—Louis Badeau.

He looked more like an Indian than ever, with his long black hair, though he was dressed in the extreme of mining dandyism, and rode a pony equipped in the white man's style.

His attendant was another Indian, and the wagon had all the appurtenances of a regular peddler's conveyance, being large, roomy, and convenient, loaded with all sorts of goods, such as were needed in the mines, and which were very scarce at Dead Man's Gulch, at that particular time.

The wagon drove into the middle of the town, and drew up in an open space, when the horses were unhitched, and the two Indians and the owner set up a large tent in the rear for a store, which was opened in due form, before the first stir of excitement was over.

Then Louis hung out in front of the tent a big placard, in which he had set out in large letters, a list of prices, far lower than anything in the settlement at the time, and took his place behind his counter, awaiting the customers he expected.

And he had not long to wait; for the miners of the Gulch were too keenly interested in the prices not to see the difference, and they began a rush forthwith, which lasted for nearly two hours, at the end of which time the whole stock of various goods which the young trader had brought with him to the town had vanished, while his till was full of gold-dust, and the profits he had realized ranged from fifty to a hundred per cent. on his investment.

And then it was, when his goods were gone, and every one knew that he had a large sum of money with him, that the old Dog-Town boys, who formed a community of themselves in the settlement, began to throw out their stories as

to the identity of the man who had just come in and made such a success.

The explanation of his presence was simple enough, since the enemy had departed from the Dog-Town valley. He had gathered up the results of his diggings in the upper valleys, made himself another wheelbarrow, and taken his way to the city, where he had expended all in the purchase of the wagon and goods, with which he had burst on the community at the Gulch, and realized nearly ten thousand dollars, inside of two hours.

The first symptom of trouble he saw, was after he had taken his sign from the front of the tent, and was helping his Indian friends to take down the structure and put it in the wagon.

Just at this time a man in the curious crowd, gathered to watch the proceedings, called out:

"Thar he goes, as mean as ever; takin' away all our dust, and never sayin' treat, oncet."

Louis looked round, and saw the face of Brimstone Jack, who had given him his first trouble at Dog-Town.

He made no reply directly; but went on with his work till the tent had been put into the wagon, and the driver had commenced to hitch the horses to the vehicle.

Then he went up to Brimstone Jack, and said to him in a low voice:

"Do you want any more trouble with me, or not? If you do, try it now."

And he put his hand carelessly on the handle of the revolver in his belt as he spoke.

Brimstone Jack changed color slightly.

"Who are ye talkin' to?" he asked. "I ain't said nothin' to you."

"Then don't talk at me, if you don't want trouble," said Louis, sharply. "I know you well enough, and I can cut your comb a second time, if you wish it. Keep a civil tongue in your head, if you don't want to get it cut out."

He saw in the crowd round him several faces he recognized; but the majority were strangers, and Brimstone Jack shrunk back, as Louis openly menaced that redoubtable warrior.

Then Badeau walked to his horse, and was about to mount it, when he heard another voice cry:

"It's the same snoozer, by gum! Give him what he deserves, boys."

The moment he heard that, he sprung into the saddle; turned his horse, and faced toward the place whence the noise had come.

His eyes met those of Dan O'Toole, who was standing there, with Chris Kapp and Sleepy Joe. Joe was the man who had spoken.

The Gulchers were looking on, with that stolid manner that showed they had no idea of interfering in any fight, but were curious to see whether the Dog-Towners, who had boasted what they were going to do to Louis when he came, would make good their vaunts.

Louis, in the course of his solitary practice in the upper valleys at Dog-Town, had become a very different man from the peaceable stranger who had entered that place unarmed. He had become a good shot, and knew it, and he had in his mind the advice of Charley Jones as to the best course to pursue in a fight in town.

He therefore turned to the strangers he saw, and said aloud:

"Gentlemen, there seems to be some ill-feeling among these men toward me, for something they think I did in some other place; but that is no business of yours. I came into this place to trade, and I have given you good worth for your money. I appeal to you to do the square thing by me as a stranger."

His words produced a hush, but when he had finished one of the Gulchers said, coldly:

"We never interfere in quarls hyar, stranger. Every man takes keer of himself."

"Then you have no objection to my taking care of myself, I suppose," said Louis, inquiringly, as he glanced round and saw that his Dog-Town foes were only three in number yet.

"None in the world, stranger," was the reply. "Go ahead, and cl'ar out the other side, ef ye want; but don't do no shootin' raound hyar. The alcalde don't 'low none inside the tents."

In fact, Louis noticed that the men who were staring at him with hostile intent had not yet laid their hands on their arms, and the fact resolved him to leave the place openly and take his chance of a fight outside in open ground.

He spoke to his Indian allies, the redoubtable Whisky Charley and Digger Jim, whom he had rigged up and brought with him, as the men he could most rely on of any he knew.

Then he led the way, and the wagon rolled out of the settlement, with himself and Digger Jim riding ahead.

As he cleared the outskirts of the town he saw that several men had mounted, and were galloping after him.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WARM AFFAIR.

No sooner did Louis see that his foes were coming after him, than he turned his horse in the road, and said to Whisky Charley:

"Drive on as fast as you like, while Jim and I take care of the road."

Whisky Charley nodded and grinned, as he shook his reins and drove on at a more rapid pace.

Digger Jim rode close to Louis, and remarked: "Man come—what do? Fight—hey?"

"Certainly. What do you suppose we came for?" asked the young man, quietly. "I have had enough of this persecution. Henceforth I am going to give them as good as they send us."

Jim grinned as he heard the answer, and leveled his rifle at the foremost man of the pursuers, firing before Louis could say another word.

There were five men, as far as they could see, chasing them; and the shot, though it hit none of them, threw up the dust so close to the foremost horse, that the riders swerved to one side, and as they came on, opened fire, with rapidity but little effect.

They were at full speed, and the motion of their horses was unfavorable to good shooting; but the men were sufficiently skillful to send their bullets in uncomfortable proximity to the two horsemen in the road.

Louis leveled his rifle in turn as they came on; and, when he fired, the foremost horse was seen to tumble all in a heap, throwing its rider over its head into the road.

The rest came on, faster than before, and fired as they came, so that a brisk fight was soon in progress.

Louis reloaded his rifle coolly as they advanced, and his second shot was equally efficacious with his first, taking down a second horse, and sending a second rider to earth.

Only three horses now remained, but the riders were so close that the young man could see who were his opponents, and recognized in the foremost Colonel Vandervoort, whom he thought he had killed in the Dog-Town valley, long before. The colonel was riding fast, and had his pistol out, with which he was firing as he came.

He had sent three shots already, and one of them had struck Louis on the butt of one of his pistols, as it lay in the holster at his side, shattering the stock, and making the weapon useless.

It was with a steady hand that the young Canadian pointed his other pistol at the colonel as he came on; and the flashes of both weapons were simultaneous, as the men fired at each other, at less than twenty feet distance.

Louis was halted in the road; the colonel was coming on at full speed.

The shot of the Forty-Niner whizzed past the ear of the young man, cutting a lock of his long hair as it passed; but the bullet of Badeau took the colonel in the middle of the breast, and he fell from his horse in the road, while the other two men pulled up in dismay, at the deadly nature of the fire they had sustained.

That pause was fatal to them; for the young man turned his attention to them, and with two rapid shots tumbled them from their horses, one shot through the head, the other the heart.

The fight was over almost before the fracas had begun, and Digger Jim waved his rifle in the air with a loud whoop, and was riding forward, when Louis called out:

"No, no. Come away. I did not seek the quarrel, and it is over. Come away, Jim."

Jim hesitated and grumbled:

"Injun no fight dat way. Take scalp."

"And that is just what you must not do," said Louis earnestly. "If we fight white men, we must fight in the white man's way. Come on, I tell you, or it will be the worse for us. See, there are more coming now."

He pointed down the road toward the distant settlement, whence the rapid advance of a cloud of dust showed that there were many more men coming; and even Jim, who knew the hatred of his race in the minds of the white men, saw the wisdom of Louis's advice, and wheeled his horse.

The wagon, with Whisky Charley, had already got nearly a mile away, and when the two men rode at speed and reached it, they looked back and saw that the men from the Gulch had gone no further than the place where the fight had taken place, where they were clustered in the road.

Then they halted their horses, and Louis said to his Indian ally:

"Go on with the wagon, and I will follow when it is safe."

Jim nodded, for he had become used to doing as he was told by the young man who talked his language, and to whom he looked, in some mysterious way, as the regenerator of his tribe.

He rode away, and Louis dismounted from his pony, to watch what his foes would do.

He saw them in the road, but the distance was too great to see exactly what they were at.

Finally he saw them go back on the road to the settlement, and a single horseman came riding along the road toward him.

Not feeling any fear of one man, whoever it might be, he allowed this rider to get close to him, and was surprised, as the other came nearer, to see the well-known outline of Charley Jones, otherwise "The Angel," in his usual dandified dress, but heavily armed.

He allowed Charley to come close, and called out to him as he came:

"Well, how are you? Do you want anything with me, to-day?"

Charley nodded as he came on, but made no answer till he was close by, when he drew up his horse and said in the dryest way:

"You're improving, young fellow. Do you know what you've done?"

"Defended myself and my property from some men who wanted to kill me and take all I had in the world," was the reply. "Do you blame me for it, Charley?"

"Not a bit of it; but you don't know what else you've done," said the gambler with a smile.

"Well, what have I done, then?"

"You've made yourself a reputation as the man it won't do trifle with," said Charley slowly, "but the boys in the Gulch are down on you, just as much as the Dog-Town boys were. I thought I'd come on and tell you that it won't be safe for you to come to the Gulch again, if you don't want to be laid out."

Louis compressed his lips.

"You mean that they will be on the watch for me, and will try to get me at a disadvantage, if I come back?"

"I mean more than that. Do you know that the men you laid out were officers of the alcalde?"

"No, I didn't. What had I done that the alcalde should take a hand in the affair? I had not hurt a soul in the town."

"That is true; but the alcalde is a man who has listened to the stories from Dog-Town, and he wants you back there, to answer for the charge of resisting his officers."

"But they never said they were officers," said Louis, who began to see that there was a plot against him. "They opened fire at me, and I had no choice but to answer them."

"The men tell a different story. They say that you fired the first shot, before they could tell you what was the matter, and that you killed one of the officers and wounded another; besides laying out Colonel Vandervoort."

"And suppose I did," said Louis angrily; for he began to feel the injustice with which he had been treated. "I have a right to defend myself from assault, and I have done so. Did you come to join my enemies?"

Something in Charley Jones's eye had warned him not to trust the gambler entirely, and he had begun to feel suspicious that The Angel had a design on him.

Charley laughed as he saw the suspicion.

"No, no, I am not in with the alcalde. If I had been, I should have told you long ago, and given you a fair chance at me. I am a friend of yours; and the proof is that here I am. My advice to you is to get out of this as soon as you can, and not to come back."

"I am much obliged to you for the advice," returned Louis coldly; "but I am not in need of it at present. I am going back to the Gulch as soon as I get a fresh stock of goods, and if they try to drive me away, it will be their own loss."

"Is there no such thing as law and order among the miners?"

"Not much," was Charley's reply. "The pistol is the best counselor when you get among them, and even that will not always take care of you, if there are too many against you. By the by, I saw Juanita in town to-day, and she don't try to conceal that she is down on you."

"But why? I never harmed her."

"That is more than I can say; but I know that she was one of the people that was most active in sending the alcalde after you, by his officers. You must have offended her mortally. She hates me bad enough; but she actually spoke to me, as if I were a human being, which is more than she has done for a long time."

Louis listened with a frowning brow.

"She wanted to come with me into the wilderness all alone, and I sent her back," he said. "I did not want any one to think that I had to take shelter behind a woman's skirts. If that made her angry, she must remain so."

"She has remained so," returned Charley gravely; "and if I were you I would keep out of her way, whatever else you do. I saw her among the crowds, when you were selling out in camp and I noticed that wherever she was, the trouble broke out as soon as she went away."

Louis looked thoughtfully at the ground.

"It seems a hard thing," he observed, "that, no matter what I do, some one is sure to take it amiss. I wish I had never come to the country."

Charley laughed.

"You're right there. The best thing you can do is to leave it, as soon as you can."

"I would do so, but for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"That they would say they had driven me out; and that is what I will not stand. I am coming back to the Gulch, and they can do their worst. If I am killed, it will cost them the lives of more than one of their men."

"They can afford that, and still have enough to kill you. If you are wise, you will take a hint and keep away. You have done well this time; but the pitcher cannot go to the well too often, without the risk of being broken at last."

As The Angel spoke, he turned his horse and rode away, leaving Louis in the road by his pony, in a brown study.

When the gambler had ridden some distance he looked back, and saw that the young man had not yet mounted, but was gazing after him in the same thoughtful way.

Charley waved his hand and the salute was returned in the same way, when Louis mounted his pony and rode away at last.

He took the road that led into the mountains that surrounded Dead Man's Gulch; soon turned the shoulder of the mountain, and was lost to sight.

The little gambler went back to the settlement he had left behind him, and found the miners in a state of excitement, produced by the artful appeals of no less a person than the very Juanita, who had risked her life to save that of Louis Badeau on a former occasion.

She had persuaded them that the visit of the stranger to Dead Man's Gulch, and his departure, without waiting to spend any of the money he had made, to benefit them in any way, even by inviting them to take a drink, constituted a breach of miners' customs that made it necessary to give the man a lesson, when next he made his appearance.

The fact that he had shot officers of the alcalde—though there was no reason why they should have been sent after him—was another argument that she failed not to use with skill; and when Charley got back to the settlement, he found the whole male population ready for a riot and ripe for a fight if the stranger should make his appearance.

CHAPTER XX. THE ALCALDE.

CHARLEY JONES had not been long in the town, when he was told that "the alcalde wanted to see him," a summons not to be refused by a professional gambler, however good a shot.

Charley was one of those men who know they are at war with society, no matter how rough, and he lived by a judicious mixture of pluck and conciliation, like the rest of his class. A single enemy he always faced, and the same with three or four; but when it came to a whole community, he knew the futility of fighting; and the alcalde represented the whole community.

So Charley went to see the alcalde, and found that official in a towering passion.

Although his title was Spanish—for the Spanish laws survived in that part of the mining regions long after the American occupation of the country—the alcalde was an American, with the real Dutch-American name of Bogart.

Mr. Bogart was a stout man, who showed his Holland extraction in his square jaw, blue eyes, and general stolidity of appearance. At most times he was silent and reserved, and by no means given to anger; but when he got excited, which was very rarely, his passion was the more to be feared, that it was the anger of a naturally quiet man.

No sooner did the little gambler enter the room, than the alcalde broke out:

"Well, sir, this is a pretty state of things. If you know when you are well off, you will get out of this place as quick as you can."

Charley stared at him placidly, as he replied:

"What is the matter, alcalde?"

"Matter!" echoed the alcalde, getting red in the face. "The matter is this, that the men saw you hobnobbing with the man who had just killed one of my officers; and the result is, that if you don't leave this place in an hour, you will be arrested. You know what that means, Mr. Jones."

Charley smiled placidly.

"It means that you will let them hang me, with no trial, I suppose."

"That is just what it means, sir," replied the alcalde, stiffly, getting over his passion as he noted the coolness with which the other received the news. "You are not a bad fellow in your way, Charley, but the boys say you *must go*, and if you want to fight the whole town, you know who will come out ahead."

"Why, the town, of course," replied Charley, not a muscle of his face stirring; "but it seems to me a little sudden."

The tone he adopted was not without its effect on Alcalde Bogart, who was a just man at bottom and really liked Charley; so that he replied, more mildly:

"Yes, it is sudden; but what am I to do? The boys saw you leave them and go to talk to that fellow, and they insist that there is an understanding between you."

"Then all I have to say is that there is no such thing. I went out to see the man and find if he was hurt, and exchanged not more than a few words with him."

"What did you tell him?" asked the alcalde.

"I advised him not to show his face here, if he did not want to be laid out. That was all."

"Are you sure that was all?" asked the alcalde, keenly.

"Perfectly sure."

"Then you did not know that the men are talking of hunting him up?"

The alcalde put the question in his most quiet way, for he had recovered his coolness.

"No! Are they? What for? He has done nothing, that I can see."

"What do you call killing an officer?" asked Bogart, grimly.

"The officer did not show his warrant."

"He didn't have time to do it. He was shot before he could get up. Well, no matter for that. The men asked for a warrant to arrest him for shooting some one in Dog-Town, and I had no option but to give it. He has resisted arrest, and we shall have to vindicate the law. The only question is, *on which side are you?* That is why I sent for you."

"But you told me that you wanted me to get out of the town, if I didn't want to be hanged. I am perfectly willing to go, alcalde."

Bogart smiled grimly as he retorted:

"No doubt you are, but *you can't go now*. If you had done so when I told you first, it would have been all well enough, but now it is too late. I have told you something that was to be a secret, and if you are allowed to go, you will go straight to the man we are after, and tell him all about it. No, sir; the thing has changed, and the question is, will you be sworn in as one of the specials, or will you go to the lock-up and stand the chance of being hung, if the boys take it into their heads to do it?"

As he spoke, the alcalde got between Charley and the door, with the look on his face of a man who has made up his mind what to do.

Charley Jones, for perhaps the first time since he had been a gambler, turned pale.

He knew the alcalde, and the worst of the matter was that he did not dare to use his weapons on him.

Bogart was a man who, alone in the community, seldom carried arms, though he knew how to use them; but was the most popular man in Dead Man's Gulch, and to kill him would be to rouse a hornets' nest about the ears of his slayer.

Therefore, for the first time, Charley began to think he was in serious danger.

"I don't quite understand what you mean," he said to the alcalde, to gain time.

"Then I'll make it so plain that you can't help but understand," was the grim reply. "I mean that we are going to have a hunt for this man, and you are his friend; and that, if you don't want to be counted such, *you must join the boys and hunt him with us*. That is plain talk, and now, Mr. Jones, I want an answer this moment."

Charley looked at the grim alcalde for a moment and then said resignedly:

"Why, of course, if you put it in that light, there is but one thing for me to do. I'll take the chances of being hung."

Mr. Bogart compressed his lips. He had not expected such an answer.

He hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"Very well, then, if you will have it; though I would prefer to have your word that you will join us."

"Of course you would, because you know that I would not break it."

"Do you choose, then, to take the chance of being hung?"

"Yes, if you want to have it that way."

"Then you can consider yourself under arrest, and give up your arms," said the alcalde, sternly.

Charley shook his head.

"There you are going too fast," he said. "I call you to witness that I did not provoke this fight; but if you have determined to drive me out of the town, I claim your word, on the other hand, which you gave me when we opened this conversation, that I should be allowed one hour to get out. If you want to make me defend myself, well and good; but you know me, alcalde. I don't want to kill you; but if I am driven to the wall, I must take care of myself."

He spoke in a low tone, with more hesitation than usual, for the little gambler was aware of the danger he ran.

The alcalde was a brave man, for he did not quail, though he was unarmed, and the other was known as a dead shot, and was bristling with weapons. Without a moment's hesitation he advanced on Charley, hoping to grasp him with his great superiority of strength and take him down.

But before he could reach the little man, came a flash from Charley's pocket, and the alcalde uttered a cry of pain, as his arm dropped by his side.

Then the little gambler, without waiting for a further advance, turned on his heel and left the room, to encounter, in the passage outside, a number of men, who opened fire on him at once, in a way that showed they had been waiting for him, and had heard the first shot.

A man less used to bar-room fights would have been taken aback, but Charley had expected it, and that was the very reason he had looked so pale when the unarmed alcalde threatened him.

He knew what was coming.

For about a minute and a half after the first shot the passage was filled with smoke and the flashes of pistols; and Charley was crouching on the floor, firing as he caught sight of the men who were firing at him.

The place was dark and the firing confused on both sides; but Charley was the coolest, and as he emptied his last shot, the way was cleared, and his assailants were in full flight into the street.

He had no time to reload; but dashed out into the open air after them, waving his empty pistols, to find the street full of men who began to shoot at him, as soon as he made his appearance. For a moment even the daring little gambler was appalled; but then he took the only chance left to him, turned, and ran through the building he was just preparing to leave.

The action was hardly seen for a moment in the smoke and confusion, but, the next, came a wild yell and they dashed after him.

Charley gave himself up for lost, but ran on and out of the rear of the building, where, by the back door, stood a pony ready saddled, held by a man whom he knew to be the servant of the alcalde.

The gambler ran to him, while still the man was staring at the building; in front of him, listening to the shots, of which he knew not the cause.

Before he could collect his senses Charley was beside him; snatched the bridle from his hand, and dealt him a blow with the butt end of one of his pistols, which stunned him; for the gambler knew exactly where to plant his blows.

He struck the man on the back of the head at the nape of the neck, and he dropped like a log.

Then, before the pursuers could get out after him, he had leaped on the pony, and was tearing down the street at full speed, the bullets whistling after him as he went.

From every side avenue, they came out on him; and he had to run the gantlet of a shower of lead, of which several bits struck and slightly wounded his pony, with the result of making it tear on, harder than ever.

His own clothes were cut in more than one place, and once he thought it was all up with him; but then came a lull, and he was out of the settlement, galloping off into the mountains, safe at last, with a crowd of horsemen at his heels, shooting as they rode, but none of them coming close enough to him to make his position dangerous, after what it had been.

He knew the pony he had seized to be swift and enduring, and, as soon as he was out of range of the foremost of his pursuers, he began to reload his pistols as he rode.

This was a difficult operation in those days; for fixed ammunition was then unknown, and the loading of a Colt's revolver had to be done from the powder-flask, while the motion of a galloping horse was not favorable to the correct measurement of the powder.

But Charley was an expert at the work in which he was engaged, and he managed to get in the powder and ram the bullets, as he galloped on. Luckily for him, the motion of the pony was very smooth, and he was at ease as to the nearness of his enemies, who had been distanced by him before he began to reload.

When at last he had got both his weapons once more in condition for a fight, the little gambler drew a sigh of relief, and turned his head to see who was following him.

He saw a dozen or more horsemen, and they had rifles, with which they were beginning to fire at him, finding that he was beyond the range of their pistols.

Charley had not yet taken his own rifle from his back, where it had been belted; but now he put his pistols into the holsters, and took the more formidable weapon, with which he halted in the middle of the road, and deliberately took aim at the foremost of his pursuers.

The man dropped in the middle of the smoke, and the little gambler saw that his pursuers were pulling up their horses.

He thought they were going to give up the chase; but, instead of that, they fired a volley at him from a halt, the bullets of which whistled so close that one tore his clothes. Then he turned and rode away.

CHAPTER XXI. THE PURSUIT.

LOUIS BADEAU was riding in advance of his wagon in a lonely gorge of the mountains, on that same afternoon, not thinking of pursuit, when Whisky Charley, who had lagged behind, suddenly came galloping up from the rear, crying excitedly:

"Men come! More fight! Take care!"

Louis turned his head and saw, in the distance behind him, a man galloping fast on the trail of the wagon, while far beyond him came a crowd of horsemen at full speed, but he could not see how many there were for the mist that hung on the mountain-side.

There was a dense fog in the air, and the Indians had warned him that a storm was coming, but he had not thought of any other danger.

The wagon was at a point in the hills when the next turn would bring them into a place where the road, which was nothing but the bed of a torrent when it rained and was dry all the rest of the year, came to an abrupt descent, and the stream made a waterfall a hundred feet or more in height.

The pursuers were still at a distance, and he told Digger Jim, who was driving, to whip up and get to the waterfall as soon as he could, when he was to unhitch the mules and wait for the arrival of the owner.

He had in the wagon nothing but the gold-dust, which was inconsiderable in weight, and

he had determined to send the whole thing over the edge of the precipice rather than let the men who were after him get it.

He knew that their main purpose was plunder, and his teeth were firmly set as he muttered:

"They shall not have it, if I cannot save it!"

The Indian obeyed the order received, and the wagon rolled off at a rattling pace, while Louis halted in the midst of the path and waited for the coming of his foes.

The foremost man was evidently pursued by the rest, though he had distanced them, and was now at a slow canter as if his horse were tired.

As he came nearer and nearer Louis recognized the figure of the little gambler, Charley Jones, and was curious to know in what capacity to receive him, for he half-suspected that he came as an enemy, and that the chase was a subterfuge to win the confidence of the man that the rest were after.

When Charley was within range, Louis threw up his rifle, and shouted:

"Halt! No further, or I fire."

The fugitive reined up his horse a moment, and made the well-known Indian sign of amity, by holding up his outstretched and open hand, calling at the same time:

"They are after me, for helping you. If you want to send away a friend, all right; but it seems to me the best thing we can do is to stick together."

Louis threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and called out:

"Come on, then; I'll trust you."

Charley shook his bridle and galloped up, remarking as he came:

"They saw me talking to you, and thought I was in with you. As a matter of fact, I was not, but since they have driven me here, we'll see what we can do."

Then he began to examine his pistols and rifle, as coolly as if there had been no danger, talking all the time:

"I had a narrow squeak of it to get out of the Gulch, but my luck scraped me through. Those fellows are the alcalde's posse, and they won't stop for a trifle. We must make a running fight of it. Do you know the trails round here?"

"Pretty well; but the Indians are experts."

"Ay, ay; you mean those niggers you had with you. I don't trust 'em much; but needs must when the devil drives. Here they come."

As he spoke he raised his rifle and set it to his shoulder, for the foremost of the pursuers was within gunshot.

For an instant the barrel was immovable, and then the flash and report were followed by the fall of the man at whom he aimed, when the rest uttered a wild yell and came on faster than ever, shooting as they came.

Charley Jones laughed scornfully, as he said:

"Fire away, you fools! It's a hard thing to send a shot where you want it from a galloping horse. Now, then, Badeau, let's see if you have learned anything since you came to the mines."

The last words were drowned in the report of Louis Badeau's rifle, and another man tossed up his arms and fell.

The rest came on faster, and Louis could now see that they numbered over a score.

Charley Jones sent another shot at them, but the man shot at did not fall, and The Angel remarked, coolly:

"We've got to run, friend Badeau, unless we want to be wiped out. Are you ready?"

Louis fired, and the flash was followed by the fall of another man, when The Angel exclaimed, with surprise:

"Why, man alive, you've learned how to shoot. Couldn't have done better myself."

Then they both turned their horses and galloped away, followed by a yell of triumph from the posse in rear, which took the flight as a sign of fear.

On they went at full speed, turned the shoulder of the mountain, and came in sight of the wagon at the end of the next valley, halted by the edge of the waterfall, with the two Indians unhitching the mules.

For a moment Louis halted, and then said, in a hurried tone:

"We've got to stand them off, to give the two Indians a little time. Yonder is a rock."

The Angel nodded.

"I see what you mean. Come on."

They galloped as hard as they could to a place in the middle of the valley where there was a large rock, that made a natural breastwork, behind which they could stand their horses and fire over the top, without exposing their persons at all.

They had hardly well got into position there, when the pursuers came round the corner of the mountain at full speed, and The Angel fired the first shot. As the smoke of the rifle lifted the foremost was seen to toss up his arms and fall; but the rest, as before, came on faster than ever, firing wildly, but sending such a shower of bullets in advance, that the top of the rock, behind which the two were stationed, was struck more than once.

Louis Badeau fired his rifle and brought a sec-

ond man from his horse, but still the rush did not stop, and the assailants were already within a hundred yards, when both men broke from behind the rock, and galloped off to the wagon. As they went, they saw that the animals had been unhitched at last, and that the Indians were driving them off into a maze of narrow passes, that led up the mountain-side from the edge of the waterfall.

Louis spurred his pony as hard as he could, and uncoiled the lariat that hung at his saddle bow as he went. The quick-witted Angel followed his example, and, as they came up by the wagon, Badeau threw the rope and caught the end of the tongue, as it hung down by the front of the body.

The wagon had been at the very edge of the precipice and the hind wheels were almost hanging over the brink.

As the end of the lariat caught the tongue, the vehicle was whirled round, and, the weight preponderating at the back, the hind wheels went over the edge of the precipice.

There was a jerk, and Louis's pony was almost thrown off its feet; but the rope was let go at the right instant, and the whole wagon went over the edge of the declivity, and fell into the valley below with a crash.

The Angel turned in his saddle and waved his rifle with a triumphant whoop, which was answered by a yell of fury from the pursuers, and the two men dashed after the Indians.

Within a few minutes later, both were behind the shoulder of the mountains, and saw that the pursuers had halted at the place where the wagon had gone over the edge of the precipice, and were staring down into the valley.

Louis halted, too, and said to his companion:

"I thought that would stop them. It was the wagon that made them so eager, and now they will try to go down and hunt it up."

The Angel was watching them keenly, and shook his head as he replied:

"You don't know them as well as I do. They are only looking to see where it has gone. They will be after us soon."

Almost as he spoke, the foremost horseman gave some sort of a signal, and the whole band took up the pursuit again, when the two friends rode off into the mountains.

Ahead of them were the two Indians—Whisky Charley on a pony, Digger Jim on one of the wagon-mules, leading the rest in a string.

They had turned off from the main path, such as it was, and were climbing the side of the mountain at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, in full view from the valley below.

As they went up, Whisky Charley waved his hand as the signal to follow, and the two men, as they rode up, jumped off their horses and began the climb, leading the animals, as they saw the Indians were doing, though for what purpose they could not divine.

They had hardly got half-way up when the enemy came tearing round the corner of the mountain at full speed, and began to fire as they came, their prey being in full sight.

Then Louis saw what the Indians had meant, by leading the mules behind them.

The bodies of the animals formed a partial shelter for the men in front, and one of them dropped almost immediately.

But the men went on, and every step brought them nearer the top of the steep slope, where they would be safe.

At last came a shout as Digger Jim reached the top, and at the same moment Whisky Charley, in front of Louis Badeau, uttered a sort of grunt, and the blood spurted from a hit in his shoulder.

But he never ceased to climb, and, within a few seconds more, was at the top and over it, the two white men being then about fifty yards behind.

Then came the flash of a rifle from the top of the hill, and a sharp cry from below.

The Angel looked round, and observed, as well as he could for want of breath:

"Good shot for the nigger!"

Then they resumed their climb, and in a few minutes had reached the top, and saw why the Indians had taken that route, rather than any other.

The top of the hill was a sharp ridge, and the descent on the other side was much sharper than the one up which they had toiled, while there was a level spot at the top, about ten feet broad, perfectly sheltered from the side on which their enemies were, and from which they could open fire, with no possibility of their pursuers getting shelter.

The ponies were got over the top, without any serious damage as far as they could see; and then the gambler lay down to rest with his rifle pointed over the edge of the bank.

Their pursuers, now about fifteen in number, had halted at the foot of the steep slope, and were evidently trying to make up their minds to storm the defenses.

Half-way down the slope lay two mules, killed; and, besides the graze which Whisky Charley had received, The Angel had his clothes riddled with bullets, while, at the bottom of the slope, the enemy were beginning to come up at last, firing as they came.

At this moment The Angel cried to Louis:

"Now's our time. Give it to them a big climb; but don't fire till your nerves are steady. It will take them some time to get their quiet."

Then he fired his piece from a rest at the top of the slope, and the fight opened at once, as Louis followed suit, and the climbing men sent a shower of lead in front of them as they came up.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORM.

THE defenders of the top of the hill had the most advantageous position, for they were sheltered, but their assailants outnumbered them five to one, and kept on advancing and firing, so that it soon became a problem whether they would not reach the top by sheer force of numbers. Several dropped on the way, but the rest came on, when a sudden shadow fell on the scene, and a thick shower of snow-flakes came driving down over the ridge, which, in a moment more, made the atmosphere so thick that neither party could distinguish the other.

At the same time the temperature fell, with a gust of cold wind that chilled the very marrow of the men at the top of the ridge, and the two Indians called out something, which Louis, who had learned something of their language from his association with them, interpreted into a warning that they would have to run to shelter.

At the same time both arose, and the four men at the top of the ridge plunged down the declivity, scrambling on and falling frequently in the darkness that reigned round them, as soon as the storm-cloud swept down on them.

As for the firing, that ceased as by magic; and, from the moment the defenders of the ridge left their position, they knew that they were safe from pursuit.

The question between them became one of whether they should be able to save themselves from being frozen to death.

The storm was one of those sudden gusts which sweep down from the Rocky Mountains, coming at a moment's notice, but lasting for days, and, in their passage, bringing falls of snow of many feet in depth, at times.

The fugitives got to the bottom of the slope as best they could, the cold increasing all the time, when the two Indians ran on, the mules and ponies, which had broken loose at the first gust, leading the way in a wild stampede.

Whisky Charley pointed to the left, screaming something which they could not hear for the howl of the storm, and led the way in a different direction from that taken by the animals.

The others followed him, and they dashed on through the biting cold and snow, at the bottom of a narrow ravine, the only thing they could see in the darkness.

Already the white flakes had covered the ground so that it could not be distinguished, while Louis Badeau felt a sense of danger, such as he had never felt before.

But still the Indians pressed on, and the dark ravine narrowed constantly, till they came to a place where the rocks met together above, and a dark hole appeared in the side of the mountain, into which Charley dashed, and, as soon as he was inside, uttered a loud grunt of satisfaction, exclaiming in English:

"Goot! Goot! Big storm! Nowhere else to go! Stay here! Goot!"

In fact, they had hardly entered the cave, when a sense of warmth and security, as contrasted with the wild tumult which reigned outside was perceptible to all.

They had entered a cave which extended into the side of the mountain for a long distance, and wound in several curves, with which the two Indians seemed to be well acquainted.

Whisky Charley took the lead, and led them from the entrance to a spot where the air was quite sheltered from any gust blowing from the outside, and the darkness was complete.

Dark as it was, however, Charley appeared to know where he was; for he was heard rummaging among a heap of something on the floor that sounded like a pile of brush, and in a minute more he called out:

"Got match? Hey?"

He had learned enough among the whites to be aware of the value of matches, and The Angel, who was a smoker, always carried matches in his pocket, and supplied him at once.

The little flame soon gleamed among the dark corners of the cave, and Charley set fire to a heap of brush, which showed that the cave was a well-known resort to him; for it revealed plenty more of the same kind, heaped up with dry sticks and logs, that must have cost a good deal of trouble and many willing hands to accumulate.

Then the two Indians grinned, as if they were well satisfied with their work, and entered into an animated conversation with each other, the result of which they communicated in English to Louis after awhile.

It seemed, from what they said, that the cave in which they stood was an old resort of the Digger Indians, when hard pressed by the tribes that had driven them to the mountains for ages.

Since the coming of the whites, when all the Indians had been served equally by the conquer-

ing race, the hostilities that had been used to exist between the different tribes had in a great measure ceased, and the cave had not been used for a long time.

Its locality was only known to the hunted and persecuted Diggers, and Charley's tribe or band—for there were only about seventy souls in the whole community—had abandoned it for years, and scattered abroad among the white men, in the various humble avocations which were allotted to them.

Both Indians, from their weather experience in the mountains, had foreseen the coming of the storm, and made their way in the direction of the cave, while the animals which had stampeded, Charley assured them, would be found in safety at the end of another valley, where there was a dense thicket of fir trees, which would afford them shelter from the storm, till its violence should abate.

Then the Indians told their white friends that the storm would in all probability last for three days at the least, during which it would not be safe to venture out, and that there was store of roots, such as the Diggers themselves had been wont to live on in times past, hidden in the cave, on which they must live; for there was nothing else to be found till they got out again.

The news was rather depressing; for the men had done some hard, rapid work that day, and needed food badly; but there was nothing in that shape with them, what they had being on the saddles of the horses, which had stampeded.

Louis went to the entrance of the cave, and saw that the Indians had told the truth about the impossibility of venturing out, in the face of such a storm as raged.

The air was full of flying snow, and the ground already covered to the depth of more than two inches, though the fall could not have lasted more than ten minutes.

There was a dreary sound of meaning in the air, as the wind rushed through the gorges, and not a living thing could be seen in the narrow ravine, which was the only prospect from the cave mouth.

Badeau looked out for awhile, and then came back and sat down by the fire, which was now blazing away merrily, the supply of fuel being plentiful enough to last them for a week or more.

But, for all the cheering influence of the fire, it was a sober group of men that sat by the blaze, and the Indians, in their native stolidity, were the most sober of the lot.

Charley Jones was the first to speak: "Pretty slim prospect, Badeau. We're going to have a hard time to get out of this."

Louis nodded gloomily, for the prospect was by no means encouraging.

"As long as the storm lasts we are prisoners," he said; "but those men who were after us must have fared worse than we."

Charley smiled slightly.

"I guess so. Serve them right for doing what they did. I hope every one of them will get frozen to death, and never see the Gulch again. The alcalde is the worst; for he tried to play me double by getting me in a hole. Glad they know, by this time, what the mountains are."

Louis seemed to be very thoughtful, for he made no answer for some time. At last he said slowly:

"If we get out of this, we ought to go and look for them. It is not right to let even an enemy starve to death in these bleak mountains. But we can do nothing for them, as long as the storm lasts."

The Angel eyed him in a curious way:

"Why, you surely wouldn't help them, after all they have done to hurt you?"

Louis nodded slowly:

"This storm is not only going to hurt them, but a good many more that are innocent of any ill-feeling to me or you. The Indians warned me that it was coming; for they always have one such during every winter, and it sometimes strikes in one place and sometimes in another. But, wherever it comes, it is sure to end in a flood that sweeps the country; and that Gulch is in the direct line of the water when it runs, as the snow melts, if not before. Jim tells me that the snow is very apt to end in rain, and after that the torrents are tremendous."

Charley chuckled:

"Good for them. Hope it will wash some of them out of their holes in the Gulch. I only—"

The words were still on his lips, when he and the Indians simultaneously started, and Louis leaped to his feet. The sound of a long quavering cry came from without the cave, and the Indians exclaimed together:

"Man come! More fight!"

They hastily grasped their arms, and went to the entrance of the cave to listen.

All was quiet for a little space, and then came the cry again, in tones that were those of a human being.

Louis listened intently, and then rushed out into the blinding storm, regardless of Charley Jones, who shouted:

"Come back, you fool. Do you want to be lost, as well as the other man?"

But the young man never heeded anything but the cry of a fellow-creature in distress, and

he ran on in the snow, which now reached near to his ankles, shouting as he went:

"Where are you?"

The cry was answered again, more faintly; but, now that he was in the open air, the direction was clearer, and Louis perceived that it came from the foot of the very slope down which he and his friends had plunged not long before.

The snow nearly blinded him, and the wind came down the gorge with tremendous force; but he struggled on, the snow under foot getting deeper and deeper every moment, till the dark shadow of the slope towered above him, but still he could see and hear nothing.

Then he stopped and shouted lustily; and, at his very feet, a smothered cry came back, when he almost stumbled over the body of a man who lay there, covered with snow.

To lift him up and drag him back with him was the work of a minute to the strong and active young man, who kept repeating all the time:

"Keep up your courage! We are all near here."

The other seemed to be hardly able to stand, much less walk; but at the touch and voice of the young man he revived so far as to stagger on.

As he went, Louis shouted for help, and soon the dark figures of the two Indians came tramping through the snow, and were beside him.

In a few minutes more they were safe in the cave; and the stranger, who seemed to be half dead with the cold and fatigue, was brought up to the fire, and had no sooner been brought fairly within the circle of its light, than The Angel exclaimed:

"Well, by Jove, who'd have thought to see you here, alcalde?"

But his words fell on insensible ears and the Alcalde of Dead Man's Gulch never opened his eyes, as he sunk down by the fire and fell into what seemed to be a dead faint.

The tables were turned, as far as he was concerned, and he was in the power of the men he had hunted down so persistently.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MELTING OF THE SNOW.

UNDER the influence of the cheerful warmth of the fire, the Alcalde of Dead Man's Gulch revived so far that, in a few minutes, he moved and cast his eyes round him, as if in search of something.

His eyes met those of Charley Jones, who said:

"It's all right, alcalde; but the boot is on the wrong foot. What made you come after us, and you with a lame arm?"

For they could see, now that the alcalde was in the light of the fire, that one of his arms was bound up with a bandage, and that his face wore an expression of pain.

Louis, who had known nothing of what had transpired between the two men, was surprised at what The Angel said; but the alcalde, in a faint, broken voice, answered:

"I had to do my duty, Charley, and you know it. If it hadn't been for the arm, you wouldn't have got off in the way you did."

Charley nodded, not without a certain measure of respect, as he asked:

"Well, and how came you here, anyhow?"

"I led the boys, and if they had followed me, it would have been all right," was the reply; "but they didn't come over the ridge, and I suppose it is all up with me now. All I ask is that you shoot quick, and put me out of my trouble as soon as you can."

Louis interrupted him, with a cheerful air that was a great contrast to the despondent way in which the poor man spoke.

"Nobody wants to kill you, sir. You were rash to come over that ridge, all alone; but the way in which you have come into our hands makes you our guest, and not our prisoner. It is a question whether we shall any of us get out of this place alive, after the storm moderates; and till it does, you are as safe from harm as if you were at home."

The wounded man turned his eyes slowly on the speaker, as if he were revolving what was said. He had come from the Gulch with a bullet-hole in his arm; and ridden many miles at speed, and climbed the ridge in pursuit, sustained by the indomitable pluck of his race and training; but the fever of his wound and the exhaustion produced by cold, when he had lost his way, after crossing the ridge, had confused his senses, and he was not quite clear what he was doing.

In a stammering way, he said:

"If I get out of this alive I'm bound to arrest you for shooting my officers. The best thing you can do is to kill me."

Louis smiled gravely.

"If your officers had shown me any legal warrant for their arrest, I should have yielded; but when they began to fire at me I could only shoot back. When you get well, if you have any duty to perform I shall not resist you."

The Angel, who had been listening closely, here burst into a sort of laugh.

"Well, if you are not the confoundest fool I ever heard of. I'd take him at his word and

kill him. He won't thank you for any of your sentimental scruples."

Louis looked at the alcalde, but the wounded man had turned his head and seemed to have no care for what was going on around him.

The young man compressed his lips, as he said to Charley quietly:

"I expect no thanks for anything I do, but I am going to do what is right. I say the man is not to be hurt, and shall be kept till we are able to get out of this alive. Only as a matter of prudence he will, of course, be disarmed."

He made a sign to the Indians who had been listening in stolid silence to the discussion; and Whisky Charley leaned over the helpless alcalde, and removed the pistols from his belt with a celerity and dexterity that prevented any assistance, if the wounded man had been disposed to offer any.

He made none, however, but allowed his weapons to be taken from him with indifference; and as the Indian removed them out of his reach, he uttered a short laugh, and muttered something which they did not understand.

Then he turned over on his side, his wounded arm resting as easily as he could get it to lie, closed his eyes and appeared to sleep, in a heavy, senseless fashion that showed that he had lost his head from the fever of his wound.

For hours after that, the silence in the cave was complete, till Whisky Charley made a signal to Louis, which the latter understood as an intimation that he might go to sleep and the two Indians would watch.

The young Canadian made no demur to this; for he was tired out with the excitement of the day, and in a short time after that he was fast asleep, in a slumber from which he did not awake for a long time.

When he opened his eyes he saw that The Angel was slumbering, while Digger Jim had curled himself up in a blanket, and was snoring with vigor.

Whisky Charley sat by the fire, bolt upright, and the alcalde was muttering in his sleep as he rested in his place, his pale face looking ghastly in the light of the fire, which had burned low.

Louis rose and went to Whisky Charley, to whom he whispered:

"Go to sleep. I will watch now."

Whisky Charley shook his head.

"Me no want sleep yet," he said. "When want, me tell Jim. He watch. White man no good keep awake. Me watch."

Louis, who knew that it was useless to have any discussion with the obstinate Indian, went to the entrance of the cave to look out.

The snow had fallen so deeply that the valley was one sheet of white, and the depth at the entrance was above his ankles, while a drift, a little further out, was up to his knees, if not higher.

As he looked, he was sensible that the wind had fallen in a great measure, and that there was a sound in the air, and on the surface of the snow, as if rain were falling.

The darkness was too intense to make out the truth; but he went back to the fire, took a brand that flamed up higher than the rest, and lighted a stick of flaring pine which lay among the stock of fuel.

With this he went to the door of the cave, and saw that he had been right in his first supposition. The lines of rain were plainly visible, and already the surface of the snow was assuming a pitted appearance, as the holes produced by the falling water dented it.

He went back to the inside of the cave, told Whisky Charley what he had seen, and the impassive face of the Indian took on a new expression at once.

He jumped up and went to the entrance of the cave, taking the same torch, and stared forth earnestly into the night.

When he came back he said, briefly:

"All over. Day come; big water."

"Is there any danger that it will wash us out of the cave?" asked Louis.

Whisky Charley shook his head.

"How can? Water run down hill. Look."

He led Louis to the entrance of the cave, and showed him, by the light of the torch, that a dark spot was already forming in the white expanse of snow, far down the valley, and added:

"All go down from there. No harm here."

Then they went back to the inside of the cave and Charley waked up Digger Jim, who rose from his place, without the stretching and yawning that usually accompanies the action in a white man; for Jim woke up, quite alert in an instant, and rose to his feet as if he had never been asleep.

Whisky Charley told him what had happened, and Jim grinned with great satisfaction, as he observed:

"Get out soon now. Rain end quick."

Then he took his seat by the fire, while the other Indian wrapped himself in his blanket and went to sleep, with a suddenness that showed old habits in times of danger and want. Both men were equally ready to sleep or wake, as it was necessary.

He seemed to take no interest in the state of

the weather outside, after he had been told by his comrade what it was. He trusted Charley in the most implicit way, and took no further thought of the matter.

Louis sat by the fire with him for some time longer, conversing in whispers, while the wounded alcalde kept on in his uneasy and feverish slumber.

The young man had no idea of the time; but when he went to the entrance of the cave again, he was surprised to see the faint light of day over the valley, while the rain was falling heavily, and a huge pool filled the whole of the ravine and extended up within a short distance of the entrance of the cave itself.

For a moment he felt anxious as to whether it would come higher; but as he listened intently to the sound of the falling rain, he became aware of the dull thunder of a waterfall in the opposite end of the ravine in which the cave ended, and after watching the pool that filled the valley for a long time, came to the conclusion that it was no longer rising.

To make things surer, he went in to Jim, and called him out to look.

The Indian cast an indifferent glance over the valley, and when Louis asked him whether the pool ever rose higher than where it was, asked in his turn:

"How can? Go over rocks."

Then, as his English failed him, he went into the sign language again, and explained that the water was at the level of the edge of the highest part of the valley, where they saw it, and that it could not rise any higher, for it fell over the edge of the rocks at the other end thereof.

In fact, as the light grew stronger, they saw that, although it rained harder than ever, the pool remained stationary, and that the torrents that poured down from the mountain on every side did not seem to alter it a particle, while the roar of the distant waterfall grew louder every moment.

Then they went back to the cave, and found that The Angel was just waking up, to whom Louis told what he had seen.

Charley Jones took the matter coolly enough.

"If that's the case, we can't get out of this hole without swimming. Some one else will have to swim, before they get through."

"Whom do you mean?"

"I mean these Gulchers; confound 'em," was the vicious reply. "They hunted me out of the place like a dog, and now they are going to get a taste of the same thing themselves. When torrents come down from these upper hills, they come with a rush and give no warning."

"Then do you think that there is danger to the people at the Gulch?" asked Louis.

"I know it," was the reply. "Before tomorrow night it will come on them, if I am not mistaken."

"And why not to-day?"

"Because the mountains will take a good deal of rain before they come to a regular flood. It is not till the next day that the water gets down into the foot-hills. We are up in the high hills, and part of the water runs the other way, but when the upper ravines are full, there will be a rush; for there is a dam of snow and ice that hangs above the very place where that town is built. I have been there to look at it before there was any great rush there. It forms every winter; and the rains make a rush when they are heavy. The Gulchers don't know it, as well as I do. But they will find it out before long, confound them!"

Louis turned away from him for a moment, and then came back to ask:

"Do you feel certain of what you say?"

"Perfectly certain."

"Then there are hundreds of human beings in grave peril, and it is our duty to warn them," said Louis solemnly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JUANITA'S PROMISE.

THE settlement of Dead Man's Gulch lay at the foot of the mountains, on the south side of a chain that jutted out from the general line of the range, and was remarkable for the even temperature of its climate, and the warmth which bathed it, all the year round.

The settlement had only been in existence, as a flourishing place, for a few months; and of the inhabitants, not more than two or three had lived there during the previous winter.

The place had become more of a town than had the settlement, from which a majority of its present inhabitants had come; and it already boasted several frame buildings, besides the new Eureka House, while more were in the process of construction, with lumber, which was brought overland by wagons at great cost, and put into dwellings and stores, before it had been a week on the ground.

The day after the storm in the mountains, the Gulch looked about the same as usual, and no one dreamed of danger; for there was nothing in the aspect of the heavens to denote it to any, save those who had lived in the country for many years.

The mountains looked the same as usual, and the only indication, that a storm had been raging there, lay in the thin wreaths of smoke that

hung round the tops of the more distant peaks, the meaning of which no one in the settlement was able to interpret; for they had seen the sight before, and few noticed it.

Juanita, the most conspicuous character of the place, was taking a stroll in her usual singular costume, after breakfast, when she was accosted by a big man in a miner's dress, in whom she recognized Jim Barnes, the "Forty-Niner."

Jim looked sober and sad, and the first words to her attracted her attention; for he said:

"Miss Juanita, the colonel's very low."

"The colonel? What colonel?" she asked, in some surprise.

"Colonel Vandervoort, miss," he said, awkwardly.

"He got a shot in the scrimmage, the day before yesterday, and got it bad."

"Well," she asked, with an indifferent air.

"I don't see what that has to do with me." Jim fidgeted and twisted awkwardly, for he was bashful before ladies; and had always stood in awe of Juanita.

"There's on'y this about it, miss," he said.

"The pore feller told me to find ye, and ax ye ef so be ye'd come and give him a visit afore he dies. That's all, miss."

He spoke in the quiet, bashful way that was habitual with him, but it was evident that he was very anxious that she should comply with his request.

Juanita hesitated.

"But what can he want with me?" she said in a musing tone. "I have but the slightest acquaintance with him."

"So he says, miss," said Jim, in the same timid, anxious way. "But he says that he's got suthin' on his mind that he's got to git off it, and you are the only pusson in the Gulch that he'd trust with it. Won't ye come, miss? He ain't got long to live, I'm afeard, and the cunnel usader be a good man in his day."

"Yes, I'll come," she said coldly, "though I cannot for the life of me see what he can want. Where is he?"

Jim brightened up at once, as he replied:

"In my tent, miss, whar the boys brung him when he got the clip."

"Who shot him?" she asked, coldly.

Jim's face fell as he answered:

"He were arter that man that come in with the wagon yesterday, miss. There were a scrimmage, and he got the worst of it. He don't blame the man, miss, but—"

Her eyes flashed as she interrupted:

"Then he is not the man I thought him. I blame him, I can tell you, and I shall not be satisfied till I have him here!"

And she stamped her foot on the ground as if, in imagination, she already had her enemy under it, while her face assumed the aspect of a demon in its intensity of anger.

Jim hesitated and cleared his throat awkwardly, as he answered:

"I dunno about that, miss; but the cunnel kin tell ye what he means, ef so be ye'll come and see him."

Juanita shrugged her shoulders, and followed him in silence. He led the way to the borders of the settlement, where a number of tents were scattered about in the land at the lower part of the opening that went by the name of the "Gulch."

This gulch was a ravine that led up into the mountains, and was the bed of a stream of the smallest dimensions in the summer.

Since the advent of the rainy season it had run for a few days rather broader than usual. Then it had gradually failed, till, at the moment when Juanita and her conductor passed its bed, to visit the wounded colonel, the bare ground lay exposed to the sun, with a mere thread of water, less than it had ever run before; and the whole depth of the ravine, as far as they could see it, stretching up to the recesses of the mountain, was dry and dusty, as in summer.

Juanita remarked it, and observed as she passed:

"Funny how that stream has dried up, Jim; isn't it, now?"

Jim cast an indifferent glance that way.

"I ain't noticed it miss, much. The pore cunnel is in that state that I ain't noticed nothin' much. S'pose it's the the dry weather. It hain't rained hyar fur a month, though it's the season when it comes down all over the rest of the country. This is the way, miss."

And he pointed to a small tent, apart from the rest, to which he led her, and the door of which he opened, by throwing back the flap.

As the woman entered the tent, she was aware of the peculiar odor that attends a desperate wound that is in the slow process of healing, and the sight of the colonel, who lay on his rude pallet, pale and wide-eyed, as if in pain and great weakness, shocked her; for she had only seen him in his prime, and the colonel had been a handsome and stalwart man.

He smiled faintly as she came in, and said, in a low voice:

"This is very kind, seniorita. I have not very long to stay here; but I wanted to speak to you about something, before I pass in my checks."

Juanita sat down by the bedside, saying, in a manner not unkind:

"I am sorry to see you in this bad way, colonel. What is it you have to say to me?"

The colonel gave a glance at Jim, who immediately left the tent, with a delicacy that his rough exterior did not promise.

Then the wounded man said to Juanita, in a low, faint voice, that showed how weak he was:

"Jim tells me you are very bitter against Badeau; and tried to set the boys to mob him, when he was here."

"It is true," she said, with a slight compression of the lips. "I have reason to be bitter against him."

The colonel listened intently to her, and then answered in the same way:

"You are wrong to feel so. The man was afraid of you. That is the reason he shunned you."

Juanita flushed crimson as he spoke, and her tone was haughty and angry as she asked:

"What do you mean? How dare you speak to me in that way? What have I to do with the man?"

The wounded man smiled slightly, as if something aroused his amusement, as he answered:

"It's no use talking that way to me, Juanita. I have not long to live, and I can afford to tell the truth. No woman ever showed the spite you did against him, but what there was some love-scape at the bottom. But you're wrong. I know it."

He had expected her to interrupt him; but she listened with more patience than he thought she could have exhibited, with her fiery and impatient character.

In a lower voice she asked:

"How do you know?"

The colonel put his hand from under the blanket which covered him, and handed her a letter, all blood-stained.

"I was going to give him that; but he shot me before I could tell him, and I deserved it. I said I would get even with him for treating me with contempt. I was as angry as you were. But that letter I got, when the boys went through his tent, and burned all the rest. I picked it up along with this, and the boys did not see me. The two will tell the story."

He extended her a little case that looked as if it contained a portrait of the old-fashioned ambrotype kind, and the woman took that and the letter, and opened the case.

It contained the picture of a young girl with a very soft, beautiful face, framed in old-fashioned, smooth bands of hair, that gave it a Madonna-like aspect.

Juanita looked at it thoughtfully, and her face softened as she looked. There was something so gentle in the face that the angry woman could not retain her bitter feeling at the sight thereof.

She handed it back to Vandervoort, with the curt remark:

"She's pretty. Well, what of it?"

"Read the letter," he said, in a low tone. "I want to show you where you have made your mistake."

She took the letter and slowly pored over it; for it was much blotted, and stained with the blood of the man who had carried it.

She read, after much difficulty, the following words:

"MY DEAREST LOUIS:—I spend all the time wondering when you will come back to me, and whether we shall ever be happy. It seems so dull and dreary here, since you have gone away; and it is so hard to be patient, when no letter comes to cheer me up. I wish there was a post every day. But I have not heard from you now for so long, I begin to fear that you have quite forgotten your poor Louise, and settled down for good in that country of gold we hear so much of. Is it such a wonderful country as they say, and does the gold really lie about on the top of the ground? Mother is well, but we are all very anxious to hear from you. Write soon and let us know—"

Here it was illegible for a space, and the blood from Vandervoort's wound had stained it so deeply that she could not make any more out of the dark-brown scrawl.

She handed it back to the wounded man, and asked him doubtfully:

"Well, what has this to do with me?"

"Only this," he said. "You are down on him, because he would not let you go with him. He only showed, when he refused, that he was a gentleman, who would not have your reputation compromised. I sent for you to ask you that, if he ever gets into your power, you will not try to have him injured."

She raised her eyebrows in surprise.

"That is a strange thing for you to say, when he has brought you to your death."

"That is the very reason I say it," he answered. "In the presence of death, I have forgotten that I am a reprobate miner, and remember that I am a gentleman by birth. I do not know where you came from; but there is something in you that makes me think you are not what you seem. You are no Mexican, and your true name is not Juanita, though you have taken it for a purpose. Let this man alone, when next you see him. Do not hound him down, and set mobs on him. He shot me; but it was my own fault, and I owe him no grudge for it. He is a white man every time, and does

not deserve to be run down by mobs. Will you promise me to do as I say?"

She hesitated a little, and at last said:

"I promise not to set any more mobs on him, if I see him. Is that satisfactory?"

"It is," he answered, and with that he sunk back exhausted.

CHAPTER XXV.

A FREE FIGHT.

THAT night, the little theater at Dead Man's Gulch was occupied by a strolling company that had made the tour of the mines with distinguished success, and appeared in a version of the then celebrated drama of the "Idiot Spy," in which Mr. Belmont—whose real name was O'Brien—evoked thunders of applause by the way in which he spoke his lines as the "Idiot," who feigns to be silly, in order to attain his revenge on the man who has wronged him.

The population of the Gulch—most of it half-drunk—was packed into the little theater, which was something like a circus-tent in the fragility of its construction, and the people had applauded every striking situation with the usual vim of a mining audience, the last act being in progress, when a disturbance was heard at the door, which had been left wide open, on account of the lack of other ventilation.

A distant buzz was heard in the streets, with the noise of shouting and shots, at which the audience began to get excited, and rise in their places, with the usual instinct of audiences.

The actors on the stage caught the prevailing excitement, and in the style which actors always affect, began to speak to the audience, begging them to "keep their seats," that "there was nothing the matter," though every one knew the reverse.

Then the distant noise increased, and dropping shots became distinctly audible, when a miner in the back seats rose and shouted:

"It's a fight, boys! Let's git aout and have a hand in it."

With that there was a rush for the doors, in which several people got trampled on, as usual, and the theater was emptied in a twinkling.

Out into the long straggling street of the settlement they dashed, to find it empty near the theater; but, some little distance off, in the moonlight, came the flashes of fire-arms and several men could be seen galloping back and forth in the road.

In advance of the more distant ones, a single horseman was coming on at great speed, and it was at him that the horsemen were shooting, as he came.

The miners, as they came out, began to shoot, drawing their pistols, and blazing away with delightful impartiality.

It was natural to them to shoot at anything they thought looked hostile, and the distant man must be an enemy.

However this might be, they acted on the supposition, and fired away; but with the bad aim, that came of frequent potations in the interval between the acts of the drama which they had witnessed, and the uncertainty of the moonlight, all the firing did not seem to affect the man coming on so fast, and, before they were fairly aware of the fact, he was in the midst of the nearest group of men, and began to fire in his turn, with such deadly effect that he tumbled the men off their horses and they broke in disorder.

Through the midst of them he dashed, and in a little more was among the miners, in front of the theater, when he reined up his horse, and shouted, as loud as he could:

"I'm a friend! Don't fire, but listen!"

He was greeted with a yell of contempt, and the firing became brisker than ever, while the man wheeled his horse from side to side, and presented his own pistol at the assailants, but forbore to fire himself, for the bullets were flying so wild that he was not in serious danger from the drunken mob.

The whole affair did not last for over ten seconds, when the horseman, seeming to see that argument was wasted on the frantic mob, wheeled his horse again and fled.

By the time he did so, most of the miners had blazed away all the loads in their pistols, and as he went up the street, the few scattering shots that followed him ceased, and he wheeled once more and came tearing back.

This time there was a brief silence, as they heard him shouting, and they caught the words as he reined up his horse, at a few paces distant:

"The dam is nearly broken, and you will have to run for your lives."

That was all, and then a man shouted from the crowd:

"I know the snoozer, naow, boys! It's the galoot that wouldn't treat! Go for him,"

They made a rush for him once more, with their bare hands and knives, and he wheeled his horse and fled in earnest.

For a few moments there was a wild rush after him, and then, as they realized the futility of pursuit, some one shouted:

"Git the ponies, boys."

The crowd scattered at once, and a wild scramble began to get the few ponies in town and take up the pursuit in the moonlight; for the stranger could be distinctly seen, not far off, where he had halted his horse again, and was

scanning the town, as if loth to leave, in spite of the rough treatment he had received.

Soon, first one, then another of the miners, came out on horseback, and began to ride after the stranger; but he still remained where he was, and did not appear to have any intention of running from them.

At last two men came up to where he was, and before they could open fire, he presented his own weapon and called out:

"If you want what the rest got, come on; but if you are men, listen to me."

They had seen so much of his powers in the way of shooting, that they halted at this, not sorry to have a chance to take a more deliberate aim than they had had an opportunity to do, so far.

"Will you men listen to me?" he called out. "I will surrender to you if you will do it."

"Surrender fu'st, and then we'll talk," was the reply, as one of the men raised his pistol.

To his surprise the answer came back:

"I will surrender. But, if I do, will you hear me or not?"

The men hesitated, and one of them said to his friend:

"That's reasonable; ain't it?"

His companion nodded, and called out:

"We'll hyar what ye have to say, stranger; but you've got to lay daown yer arms."

"If I do, will you protect me from that mob of maniacs that are howling out there?" asked the stranger.

"We will," was the reply; and then he came forward in the moonlight, and rode up to them, so that they recognized in him the man who had come to the Gulch, only two days before, and had made such a fight against the officers sent to arrest him.

He took off his weapons, and handed them to the foremost of his pursuers.

"I have kept my word," he said proudly, "and I expect you to keep yours."

There was a tone of respect in the answer that met him:

"Stranger, you air a white man, arter all. Jim Jenkins and me, we'll see you through."

He nodded slightly, and they saw that his face was very pale in the moonlight.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I got hit in the trouble down at your town; but I bear no malice for the shot; for I know the man was not in his senses when he fired it. You are in great danger to-night."

"Danger!" echoed the first of his captors. "I don't see nothen to be skeered at naow."

Louis Badeau pointed up toward the hills, and his tone was one of solemn warning, as he said:

"The danger is there. There has been a storm in the upper mountains and the floods have filled a valley above this place; so that there is a lake there two miles long. I came down from the hills to warn you, when I might have staid there, and let you all drown."

He was interrupted by a derisive laugh.

"Ah, what are ye gabbin' abaout! We ain't no darnation fools."

Then the man who had done the most talking continued:

"There ain't hardly a drop of water in the run; and the Gulch is as dry as a chip."

"I know that, and that is the danger," replied Louis earnestly. "There is a dam of snow and ice above, in the upper hills; and the rain in which the storm ended has weakened it, so that it may break at any moment. For the sake of the lives of all the people in the town, I beg you to tell them and give them a chance to escape before it is too late."

But the men would not listen to him, and the man to whom he had surrendered said, with an angry scowl:

"I thought you was a white man, and ye're only a darned skunk. Hyar come the boys, and naow, ye see, ye'll git what ye deserre, fur layin' aout the boys that went arter ye, with the alcalde."

For there was the clattering of hoofs in the road from the Gulch, and up came at speed some dozen or more horsemen.

They were full of excitement, and surrounded the prisoner with loud cries, ready to kill him at once had it not been for his captors, who persuaded them to let him alone, that they might have the pleasure of "hanging him in the morning, after a fair trial."

Then they took him into the settlement, and all the miners flocked round him in the moonlight as he was taken to the jail, which was but a frail building, in the so-called court-house.

Ten minutes later he was left alone in a room which was used for the confinement of prisoners, and as he sunk on the floor in the corner, he muttered to himself bitterly:

"Jones was right. I was a fool to come here. They are not men, but beasts; and the world would be well rid of them, if they were all drowned together."

Then he sat there in the corner, thinking of the prospect before him, with no very bright hopes of anything that might happen.

He had, at great personal risk, got out of the cave in the upper valley, to the horses, which were in another valley, close by, shut in by the water. He had taken a circuitous route to get

to them; had ridden his pony all the day and part of the night, to warn these men of their danger; and this was his reward.

They had tried to kill him without hearing a word; had laughed him to scorn when he told them what he knew was the truth; and here he was in the cell, with the pleasant prospect that he would be hung by Lynch law, in the morning, if the flood did not come sooner than he anticipated, and drown him, in spite of his warning, with the rest of the townsmen.

Sufficiently gloomy were his thoughts as the night wore on, and he could only hear the sullen tramp of the guards without.

But even the tenor of his thoughts could not hide the fact that he was pretty well tired out by his long ride, and that the grazes of more than one bullet, received in the free fight in the street, had drawn a good deal of blood from him, so that he felt quite weak and inclined to sleep.

The tension of his nerves, produced by indignation, gradually relaxed; and he fell into a slumber that lasted till the light of dawn shone in at the window, and he heard the voice of one of his guards, saying:

"Come, git up and have some grub. We don't wanter starve a man to death, if we be gwine to hang him, afore ten o'clock."

He rose somewhat stiffly, and found that his jailer had brought him in a pot of coffee, some salt pork and tough indigestible bread of the kind baked by the miners, on fires lighted in the open air.

Poor fare, but better than nothing; and he sat up and enjoyed it after a fashion, while his jailer watched him curiously. When he had eaten, the man said with a grin:

"That 'ere story of yourn won't save ye to-day, stranger; fur there ain't no signs of a flood yit, and won't be. You've got to stand yer trial, the same as the rest of 'em."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIAL.

"STAND my trial for what?" asked Louis, with some impatience. "Are you folks here crazy or not? What have I done to be tried for?"

His jailer grinned again.

"That ain't fur me to say. Ye'll know it quick enough, anyhaow. I'm sot hyar to watch ye, and see ye don't scape, and that's all my biz. But I must say ye was darnation green, to come hyar again, arter the time ye had the other day."

The tone of the man was by no means ill-natured, and Louis asked him:

"Would you not have done the same as I did, if you had been in my place?"

The jailer burst out laughing.

"Waal, you *must* be green. What in thunder did ye come hyar fur, anyway, when ye was safe up in the maountings? No one wouldn't have come arter ye thar, and ye was safe."

"I came here to save the lives of all your people," said Louis earnestly; "and you will be sorry, before this day is over, that you did not listen to me, and take away your goods; for you will have no time, when the flood comes."

His guardian seemed to be staggered at the earnest way in which he spoke, for he said:

"And ye reely think we're gwine to have a flood, stranger?"

"I know it," said Louis firmly. "The Indians know this place better than you people, who have never lived here in the winter, and they have told me what the danger is, in reality. The upper valley is full of water now, and the snow-dam is all that holds it from coming down here. If the weather gets cold up there, and the snow and ice freeze solid, it may hold for a time; but the warm days down here have their influence up there, and the moment the dam breaks, the water must come down."

The man scratched his head.

"Waal, that ain't my biz. Mebbe it's true, and mebbe it ain't. The boys air down on you fur havin' laid aout the alcalde, and that's what they air gwine to hang ye fur, I'm thinkin'."

"Your alcalde is not dead, but lies wounded in a cave in the hills," said Louis. "I was not the man that shot him; for he got his wound in this town—"

"Ay, ay, we all know that," responded the other.

"It was that 'Angel,' as they call him, did it; and the boys are down on him, too, but all the same, he went up to the hills arter you-uns, and the boys say he's been dealt with foul."

Then, as he was leaving the room, he added with a scowl:

"I wouldn't be in your place, stranger, fur s'athin'; fur the boys air down on ye, like a thousand of brick."

And he went away, leaving Louis to digest the information as best he might.

His only grain of comfort was that the flood had not yet come, but would not long be delayed. When it came, he *must* be vindicated, while the fact of the alcalde being yet alive must be made evident, if he received anything like a fair trial.

Louis had come into the town alone, and had run on some miners, out in the moonlight, on their return from a ride in the vicinity of the Gulch, but he had swept past them so quick that they had not recognized him, and had only fired at him on general principles, as a stranger, at whose expense they were willing to have a little of the rough fun that pervades miners and cowboys alike.

Now the time seemed to drag heavily, as he listened to the buzz in the street outside the jail, and the sun had been up some hours, when his jailer came in, with a number of heavily-armed men, to tell him that it was time to go before the judge.

The judge was the only lawyer in the place, and a pretty hard case at that, like most of the men in the mining-regions. He had drifted into Dead Man's Gulch, no man knew from whence, and had been elected judge, because there was no one else in the district who knew any law at all, and he had the reputation of knowing a good deal more than he really did.

Louis was taken through the street in the sunlight, in the midst of a huge crowd of people, who stared at him and hooted, with the air of men who were determined to have his blood, with or without cause. He felt decidedly nervous when he saw all the weapons in their belts, thinking that some of them might take a fancy to take a shot at him, without waiting to go through the formality of a trial.

But he reached the court-room in safety, and was put into the prisoner's box—one of the things in which "the Gulch" took its pride.

Here he was charged with having shot two of the alcalde's deputies, and the alcalde himself, and was asked by the judge:

"Naow, haow d'ye want to be tried? Will ye have a jury, or won't ye?"

The prisoner faced his judge, and asked in his turn:

"What difference does it make, if you have determined to kill me, guilty or innocent?"

The judge put on his most severe aspect, and growled out angrily:

"If this court knows herself, young man, you're gwine to have a fair trial, and it ain't no use to talk that way. Will ye have a jury, or do you want me to do the tryin'?"

Louis looked at the man from head to foot, and answered quietly:

"If I *must* be tried, I want as good a chance for my life as I can. I demand a jury trial."

The judge nodded.

"That's yer right. We ain't no galoots hyar. I call on the sheriff—no, I mean the alcalde—to git the jury inter the box."

Then came a growl from the crowd, as a man sung out:

"The alcalde ain't hyar. That snoozer must have wiped him aout and his pals."

The judge looked sternly round.

"Silence in the court," he cried. "This young feller is on trial, and I don't want no man to be a-shovin' in his oar. I'll call the jury myself."

Which he proceeded to do, calling them all by their mining names, which were sufficiently queer to have excited risibility in any other part of the world, but which passed unnoticed in the Gulch, they being those by which the men were known to all their companions.

It did not take long to impanel this jury, for the prisoner was well aware that it would be useless for him to challenge any of them, unless they put in such men as Brimstone Jack, or some of the Dog-Towners who had been actually engaged in the attack on him.

They were all in the box at last, and the judge cleared his throat and called out:

"Whar's the *liar* fur the people?"

The question produced a ripple of laugh-

ter in the crowd, at which the judge gazed frowningly round him, and observed with dignity:

"This hyar court is got to be kerried on in the proper way; and who ever h'ard of a trial that didn't have no *liar* to take charge of the case fur the people? As there ain't none app'inted, yit, I'll app'int Slim Tim, to take charge. He knows more law than any man in the room, allers exceptin' the court."

Slim Tim was a large, fat man, who had received his name in ironical allusion to his appearance, and who, being able to read well, and having the gift of the gab, had a great reputation in the camp, as an oracle on questions of politics.

He rose with dignity and proceeded to his place, the matter having been arranged beforehand between him and his chum, the judge.

He took his seat in front of the judge's bench, cleared his throat and began:

"Please your honor, this man is accused of shootin' two officers, sent after him yesterday, and a number more who went off with the alcalde, to hunt for him. They hain't come back; and this man ought to know what has become of them."

Then he paused a moment, while the spectators gave an audible murmur of gratification at the plain way in which the case had been put, and Tim continued:

"There ain't no doubt as to his shootin' the officers; and there ain't no need to call no witnesses. I move that the jury convict him, and he be hung at once."

Then the sapient judge turned to Louis to ask:

"Well, and what have you to say, young man? Do you deny the charge, or don't you?"

Louis could hardly help a smile at the way in which the trial was being conducted, but the joke was too serious to him, to smile long.

"I don't know, your honor," he said quietly, "that I ought to be called on to say anything yet. If the gentleman who accuses me will call his witnesses, I may know what to say. It is true that I resisted some men who came after me, and began to shoot at me without warning; but I had a right to defend my life. They did not say they were officers, or I should have yielded to them. As for the alcalde, he is in the mountains, where I saved his life, and he will probably be down here, as soon as he gets well. I deny the charge, and call on this gentleman to prove it, if he can."

The judge was a little puzzled; but he affected not to notice anything, and said:

"Call on your witnesses, Tim."

Tim, in his turn, was puzzled; for he had not counted on having to call any witnesses at all, the case being clear in his own mind that the prisoner ought to be hung.

He turned however to the crowd behind, and asked at random:

"Ain't there nobody hyar who saw him shoot at the officers?"

"I did," yelled a voice in the rear, and Brimstone Jack came up, eager to make a figure by giving his evidence.

Without any formality of swearing him in, he was questioned, and told how he had been on the road when the prisoner shot at the officers, and that he himself was very near getting shot into the bargain.

Tim questioned him for a while, and then said to Louis:

"Now, then, ask all the questions you like, and much good may it do ye."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FLOOD

Louis faced Jack and began:

"You say you saw me shoot the officers?"

"Yes, I did, and you needn't deny it," said Jack in a blustering tone. "I ain't no slouch, I ain't."

"Where were you, when you saw it?" asked the prisoner quietly, for he knew that Jack had been nowhere near the place, and that there was no witness as to the act itself, for the officers who had been there had all gone on, afterward, with the alcalde.

Jack hesitated.

"I were in the road, not fifty feet from ye, and I nigh got hit, too."

"Were you mounted or dismounted?"

"Afoot, in course. I ain't rich enough to own a hoss."

"Were you in town, when I came in with my wagon, to sell my goods?"

"Yes, I were," said Jack, stoutly; "and that is the reason I went arter ye. I knowed what a mean cuss ye were, and I were baound to git even with ye fur it."

"Did you see the way I went out of town?"

"Sartain I did. Ye went ahead of yer waggin."

"And how far from the camp was it, that the fight took place?"

Jack hesitated.

"Abaout two mile, I should think."

This was a fact, for he had been to the place after the fight was over, and knew where it was.

"And how did you get there? I rode at a sharp trot. Do you mean to say that you ran all the way?"

Jack colored up, but stoutly maintained:

"I was thar. I'm a fu'st-class runner, and you ain't got the hoss that kin beat me."

Louis turned to the judge.

"The man lies. I saw him at the edge of the town when I rode out, and it is absolutely impossible he could have seen what he says he did. But I have no further questions to ask him. If you have no more witnesses of the same sort, I will admit, to save you trouble, that I did shoot at certain men, who shot at me first, and that is all you want."

The sapient judge turned to the jury with a wise look.

"The prisoner admits what's charged ag'in' him, and that's all we want. Naow, we'll call the next witness, as to the alcalde. Who saw him go away from hyar?"

"I did," said Brimstone Jack, who had not yet quitted the box. "I seen him ride by, arter that man had run from the rest of the boys. He went with a hull posse, arter that cuss they call The Angel, who stole a hoss and skipped. That man ought to know whar he is, and if he don't, he oughter be made to tell."

The judge nodded, and all the mob that surrounded the box stared at the prisoner, as if they were tired and wanted to proceed to judgment at once.

But the judge, who wanted to prolong the scene as much as possible, for the sake of the dignified and imposing figure it made him cut, went on to say:

"We don't want to do nothen' ag'in' the law, hyar, and we want to give the prisoner all the chance fur his life that a man kin have. Let him tell what has become of the alcalde, and mebbe, if he tells the truth, we kin give him another chance. Spit it aout, young feller."

Thus adjured, Louis, who could hardly help a laugh at the way in which the case was conducted, told how he had met Charley Jones in the mountains, and how the alcalde's posse had chased them over the passes, till they made the stand at the top of the ridge. Then he described the way in which the storm had separated them, and how he had finally stumbled on the alcalde, in the snow, nearly frozen to death.

The people listened to him with evident incredulity, and the jeers that greeted the end of his story were the cue for the judge to say:

"Is that the best lie you kin tell, young man, to save yer life? It won't wash, I tell ye. What brung ye hyar, arter all this? Whar air yer pals, and what's the scheme, anyway?"

Louis colored high with anger at the coarse way in which the other spoke.

"I don't understand what you mean," he said. "I came here on no scheme. The rest of my companions would not come with me, and warned me not to come, for I should be treated by you in just the way you have done. They are in the mountains, with the alcalde, and if you hurt me, I am not responsible for what they do to the alcalde. I warned them not to hurt him; but the Indians will not mind that, if they hear I have met with foul treatment, when I came to do you a favor."

His words produced the first effect he had yet observed in the audience, and the judge, in a doubtful way, observed:

"If we thought the alcalde was alive—"

"You can prove it, if you like," said Louis. "I do not know what has become of the other men; but I left him in the cave, well provided with comforts. His men are somewhere in the mountains, and if they

were lost in the storm, their bodies will be found. I am willing to give you the route they took. But that is not what I came here for. There is a danger impending over you at this moment, to which you will not listen, and before many hours it will be on you. I tried to tell your men last night, but no one would listen to me. Will you hear me now, and then you can hang me, if you like."

Even the wild crowd in the hall was impressed by the earnestness of his demeanor, and the judge said:

"What have ye got to tell?"

"Only this," said Louis, speaking rapidly. "The stream that runs through your gulch has been running nearly dry for a month now, and there is a dam of snow and ice that holds all the water from the upper hills. To-day is warm, and that dam will break. When it does, you and all your town will be swept away, like straws in a high tide."

But the words met with no more credence than they had the night before, and the judge took on himself to lecture the prisoner with much dignity, on the uselessness of telling lies to save his neck, when the truth was known. Then he added:

"If ye hain't no more to say, I'll pass sentence on ye."

Louis folded his arms, and looked the other in the face with lofty scorn.

"If I had known what a set of idiots you in this place were, I would not have tried to save your lives," he said. "Sentence away, and hang me quick; for if you don't do it, you will never have a chance to hang any more innocent men."

The crowd murmured at this, and the judge, with greater dignity than before, said: "Very well. Then stand up, and face the court."

The words had no sooner left his lips than Louis was on his feet, when a disturbance arose at the door; and Jim Barnes, the Forty-Niner, forced his way into the room, crying:

"Hold on! Hold on! That man ain't done nothen'!"

"Silence in the court!" roared the judge angrily. "This ain't no bar-room, Mr. Barnes."

"It ought to be," roared back Jim with equal ardor, "for the rummies I see hyar. I say this man ain't done nothen' at all, and he's come hyar to save aour lives. The Gulch is full of water, and she's a-risin' every minute. The hull town'll be under water afore another hour, ef ye don't scatter. Hark to that!"

As he spoke, his gestures attracted attention to the open door, and there was a brief interval of silence, when the dull roar of something outside struck on the ears of every one.

Jim did not wait to see what they would do, but he remained by the door, shouting:

"Git up and git, all of ye, or the taown's gone, and you with it."

Then came a wild rush for the door, every one forgetting the prisoner in their excitement, as they ran out into the street, and saw that the gulch-stream, which ran through the very midst of the camp, had risen, as Jim said, and was rising faster and faster, the water creeping up with a rapidity that fairly amazed them all. Even the judge, at the news, hastily deserted the bench, made his way, with more haste than dignity, out by the back door, and ran as fast as he could to the stable where his pony was kept—the said stable being only a stake, to which the animal was tied.

Louis, finding that he was left alone—for he had been forgotten in the confusion—followed the judge at his best speed, and found himself in the rear of the camp, with every one fleeing for their lives from the water, which was rising in a swift and silent way that showed him what a mass must be tumbling down from the mountains, by this time.

There was no cloud in the heavens, and the rise of the water was on that account the more mysterious, for no one seemed to know what was the cause, while the fact was before their eyes, and the rapidity of its coming had already rendered many outlying houses and tents islands.

The young man, so suddenly freed, cast a rapid glance round him, and saw that, if he remained where he was, he would soon be surrounded, for the flood was coming up to the top very fast.

He took his course to the highest ground he could see, and had a smart run to get there, ahead of the flood; finding a number of animals, ponies and cattle, that had broken their fastenings and run for safety to the nearest refuge. Here he remained for a few moments, looking round him, when his attention was attracted by the voice of a man, shouting for help.

Turning in the direction from whence it came, he saw Jim Barnes, the Forty-Niner, waving his hand frantically from a place not a hundred yards off, where he stood in the water up to his knees, beside a tent that was already in the midst of the flood.

Seeing only that help was needed, and remembering the words that Jim had used in the court when he dashed in, the young man waded out to the place where the Forty-Niner was standing; and, as he came, Jim shouted:

"Thar's a man in hyar, who's gwine to be drowned, if he ain't got aout. He ain't able to move."

"I'll help you," cried Louis; and with that he waded on till he came to the tent, and there they found Colonel Vandervoort, who lay on his couch, pale and bloodless; but, as soon as they came in, greeted them with a smile, saying:

"Just in time, boys. I haven't passed in my chips yet; but I haven't much time. What's the matter? Is the town afire?"

Louis made no answer but to take the end of the rude couch on which Jim had laid the colonel. It was made in the usual style of the camp, of long, springy poles; and the top was only covered with blankets, so that it was easy to lift it and its burden together.

Louis took the head and Jim the foot, and they went out of the tent, carrying their burden, to find the water already up to their waists, rising so rapidly, and with such a strong current, that they had great difficulty in keeping their feet, as they staggered on.

In a few steps more the ground rose; but the water rose with it, and they had a long and hard struggle before they found the water below their knees, and saw dry ground not far from them.

This was only a knoll near the camp, on which were huddled several people, staring at the water, as if they had suddenly gone crazy at the danger.

With some more trouble the two men got there at last, and the first thing Louis saw, was the face of Brimstone Jack, pale as death, showing that the man was completely demoralized.

All the brag had gone out of him, for the flood showed no symptoms of abating, and the bodies of drowned men and animals were floating past the knoll, as the dark and turbid current swept them on to the plains below.

At a little distance, some one on horseback was trying hard to stem the current, and Jim uttered an exclamation of surprise, as he said:

"By gum, if it ain't Juanita!"

The dauntless girl was mounted on a pony, in the style of the Indian women, and was trying to guide the animal toward the hill; but the current was so strong that the pony was swimming half the time, and every time it lost its feet it was swept down the current, till it reached a place where the ground was a little higher than the rest, where it renewed its efforts, with decreasing strength all the time.

Louis saw that if she renewed the effort many times, she and her pony were liable to be swept away down the torrent, in which case there was little hope for them; and while he stood, doubting what to do, there was another rise of the waters, which reached nearly to the top of the hillock on which he himself stood, and at the same time Juanita was carried off from the lesser eminence on which she had taken her stand, and he saw her go off down the stream, as if resigned to her fate.

Then he turned to Jim Barnes, and said, quietly:

"That woman has got to be saved. You take care of the colonel and the rest of them. I am going to make a swim."

With that he hastily doffed his upper clothing and plunged into the water, no one offering to hinder him.

They saw him swim off at a great pace, for the current carried him along rapidly,

and he did nothing but keep himself afloat.

Gradually he got further and further, till his head became a little black spot in the midst of the waters, and as he went, they saw that it was getting nearer and nearer to the horse and its rider, which was still driving along in the current.

At last both became lost, as they neared a hill crowned with a grove of trees, and the men on the hillock by the town saw them no more.

Either both had been drowned, or had disappeared in the grove.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

CHARLEY JONES, *alias* "The Angel" was in a temper decidedly unangelic, that very morning, as he sat by the entrance of the cave, up in the mountains, and brooded over what he called the "confounded folly" of his late companion, Louis Badeau.

Charley had done all he could to dissuade Louis from leaving him the day before, and, when Louis had taken his departure, he had contented himself with warning him of what was coming, and telling him that he would not go with him on such a fool's errand.

The Indians, on the other hand, had been much disturbed at the notion that their friend was going to leave them, to save men whom they hated; with the danger that those very men would kill him, as soon as he made his appearance among them, and before he could tell his tale.

Whisky Charley had gone off at the same time as Louis, to help his friend catch the ponies which were in the neighboring valley, and Digger Jim had been left alone in the cave, to guard the wounded alcalde.

He was inside now, while Charley was brooding by the cave-mouth, watching the waters, which had receded almost entirely from the ravine in which the cave opened, revealing the expanse of dark mud that showed the recent flood.

Charley was still brooding when he heard a slow step behind him and the wounded alcalde came forth from the cave looking weak and pale but with his arm in a neat sling and his dress undisturbed.

Alcalde Bogart came out, sat down by the gambler on a rock, and observed with a sort of sigh, as he looked down the valley:

"It's pretty lonely, up here, Charley."

Charley shrugged his shoulders.

"Likely to be more lonely yet, alcalde."

"What do you mean?" asked the other, in the listless manner of a man who cares very little what becomes of him, in his depression of spirits. "I don't understand you."

Charley turned round on him.

"I mean that there are only three men in the Gulch just now; and there's likely to be only two, if Louis Badeau don't come back."

The alcalde, who had been delirious the day before, and had but just recovered from the fever of his wound, so that he was extremely weak yet, appeared to be confused, for he asked:

"What do you mean, sir? I do not comprehend a word you say."

Charley scowled at him, with the first ill-natured expression he had yet shown—for he was usually light and careless to an excess.

"I'll tell you plainly what I mean, then," he said slowly. "You and your pals out at the Gulch wanted to run me out of the town for nothing; and you did run out another, who is a better man than any of us. I mean Badeau. You chased him out for nothing at all, and he turned on you and whipped all your posse. Now you see that water. Yesterday it was up to the mouth of this cave; and to-day it is all gone. Do you know where it has gone to?"

The alcalde passed his unwounded hand over his forehead, as if trying to collect his thoughts.

"How should I know?" he asked.

Charley nodded sternly.

"Very well, then, I'll tell you. It has gone down to Dead Man's Gulch, and, by this time, the whole place is under water. Now, do you know where Badeau has gone?"

"No."

"I'll tell you that, too. He went away from here, while you were asleep, against my advice, to warn your friends and save their lives. Mark you, they had done noth-

ing to him but bad; and he went off, at the risk of his life, to save them. Now I ask you what ought to be done to such a man?"

The alcalde seemed to be confounded at the news, for he made no answer at first; and, when he spoke, it was to ask another question:

"Are you sure of this, Charley?"

"I am. He went away, and he would not be denied. One of the Indians went off with him to help him to catch a pony. He ought to have been back by this time, if he has not been foully dealt with. I tell you this, alcalde: if harm has happened to that man, your life shall pay for it."

At the sound of this threat, the alcalde drew himself up haughtily, to say:

"You can do as you like about that, sir. I am not known as a man who is afraid to die, and I have shown that more than once, as you know."

Then, in a milder tone, he added:

"But if this man has done what you say he has, he is a wonderful fellow, and ought to be called the whitest man in the mines."

"And that's what he is," cried Charley, for the first time breaking out. "I wouldn't have done it in his place, and I would have let the whole gang of them drown. You were in it too, and you needn't deny it, alcalde. You ordered the men to chase him, and it is all your fault."

Again the alcalde drew himself up, for the language of the other irritated him.

"I had a complaint against the man; and, if he had yielded in the first place, there would have been no trouble. Do you suppose that I am one to let Lynch Law be played on any man in my camp?"

"You told me that it would be played on me," the gambler answered sullenly. "But I beat you all, and you bear my marks on you to-day."

The alcalde compressed his lips, as if struggling with his anger, for he was a man who had been used to having his own way all his life.

He turned his back, walked off for a few steps, and then sat down on a rock to muse, while the gambler watched him furtively, expecting to have to shoot him in a few moments.

The silence between the two became oppressive, till the alcalde suddenly rose and came back to Charley, extending his hand.

"Jones," he said, "there is no use in you and me having a difficulty about nothing. If you will take my word and the man is not dead yet, I will save his life. All I ask is liberty to go back to the Gulch, and take you with me."

Charley Jones curled his lip.

"A likely scheme, indeed. And, as soon as we get there, I should be double-banked, and you would have the laugh on me. No, no, alcalde, that plan won't work."

The alcalde seemed to be struggling with himself for a moment, for he was silent.

He turned and walked away again, and then came back, when he broke out:

"Mr. Jones, you are not behaving like a white man yourself. What am I to do? I don't want a man who has saved my life to be killed for doing other men a benefit. Tell me what to do, and I will do it. I am no nigger. The man did something for me, at all events. He found me, out in the snow, nearly frozen to death, and he put me in safety. I must do something for him in return, mustn't I?"

Charley gave a sort of sniff, as he said:

"That's true as Gospel, alcalde. You ought to do it, if you don't."

"Then what can I do?" asked the other, in a tone of more excitement than he had yet shown. "I want to behave right; but how can I, when you won't tell me what to do?"

Charley rose and faced him, with a new light in his eye, as he said:

"Alcalde, I believe you are a white man, after all. Will you dare go back with me to the Gulch, hurt as you are, and try to save the man, if it is not too late?"

The alcalde bowed gravely.

"I said I'd do it, and I'm ready."

"Remember that you're pretty weak yet," said the gambler warningly.

"I know it; but I can sit a horse yet, and if there is any doubt of my getting there, you can tie me on," said the alcalde earnestly. "I'm ready to do anything to save the man, after what he has done for me, if I

have to arrest him and you, the moment I have saved his life. I'm no nigger, Charley Jones, and you'll find that out. I'm ready to do my duty at any time; but if I have to arrest him, you can be sure of one thing, that the man shall have a fair trial, and that they sha'n't play Judge Lynch on him, as long as I am alive to stop it."

Charley nodded.

"That's all right, alcalde. I know you've got queer notions of your duty, as you call it; but the man shall not be arrested without a warrant, in due form of law. He has enemies who want his blood; but that is all there is to it. They have not a shred of a case against him, and you will find that out, when you come to sift their stories down to hard facts."

"Then, the sooner we go the better," said the alcalde, earnestly. "While we are here, he may be in peril; for I know that the boys are in the Gulch. They hang a man first, and try him afterward, and then they say they are sorry for what they have done; but that don't bring a man to life again."

Charley Jones wasted no more time in talking, but went into the cave and called out Digger Jim, who rose at the summons, and, when he was told that they were going to leave the place and go back to the camp, made no objection.

He had kept the arms of the alcalde in his own belt, and asked Charley:

"You no gif him pistol; hey?"

Charley shook his head.

"Oh, no, Jim. Not such a fool as that. The alcalde is a square man; but there's no use in tempting Providence, by giving him a chance to be crooked. He don't want any arms."

Jim seemed to be satisfied.

"Goot," he said sententiously. "White man not safe to trust. Injun same all time."

Charley smiled at his reasoning, but made no remark on the subject, and in a little time more, the trio proceeded to the next valley, where they found the ponies feeding.

The animals, in their flight from the storm, had followed, with the instinct of their kind, the most sheltered ground, and had run into a valley which formed a trap from which there was no exit, but into which the snow had not fallen so deeply that they had not been able to get shelter under a dense thicket of fir trees, in which they were found, feeding on the natural hay, formed on the ground by the short grass, that had faded and cured itself in the heats of the preceding summer, and had been revealed to them by the melting of the snow.

The animals were somewhat wild from having been free for two days; but they had but little trouble in catching them, thanks to the nature of the ground, which surrounded them with a wall of rock on three sides.

They were caught, as they had broken away, all ready saddled, and the trappings were put in order.

The party of three mounted and rode out of the valley, round by the ridge which they had crossed when they took refuge in the cave. Once on the other side, they peered over the landscape, in hopes of discovering something of the posse of men who had come out with the alcalde; but there was no sign of life there.

The alcalde sighed heavily as he said:

"Reckon the boys are all gone, Charley."

Charley cast a glance round, and looked at the Indian inquiringly.

Digger Jim shook his head.

"White man all gone," he said. "Too cold for him. See!"

He pointed down into the very valley into which the wagon had been tumbled, two days before; and the men by his side rode close to the edge of the precipice, and peered down.

They could see the wagon there, or rather its fragments, with a number of people clustered round, as they thought at first; but a second glance convinced them that the people were all dead, and the Indian nodded his head and said:

"White man fool. Go after wagon when snow come—all drown, down dere."

Yet there was no water going over the fall as he spoke, and it was only his knowledge of the country that enabled him to pronounce so authoritatively on the fate of the bodies they saw below them.

Charley Jones looked thoughtfully from

the precipice, and observed to the alcalde:

"They knew the wagon was loaded with money, and that's why they went after it."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE GROVE.

JUANITA, the mysterious adventuress who had played such a singular part in the mining regions, had kept her promise to Vandervoort, as far as not aiding to raise a mob against Louis Badeau; but her vanity was too much hurt, and she felt too bitter against him, to think of aiding him in any way to escape from the toils which she knew surrounded him, when he made his appearance in Dead Man's Gulch. She was content to let matters take their own course without interference, as long as she did not openly aid his foes.

She heard that he had surrendered, and had been placed in the flimsy jail; and she saw the crowd that followed the prisoner to court in the morning.

She had at first been inclined to see the trial; but refrained and sat in her own tent—for she lived in a tent by herself at the edge of the camp.

Too restless to stay quiet long, and thinking of the revenge in store for her, without any agency of her own, she at last rose, went out and saddled her pony to take a ride, when she heard a dull roar—the same that had startled Jim Barnes and sent him to the court, to warn the people of what was coming.

Juanita heard it too, and saw the white flood, as it first rushed down the gulch, filling the channel at once, and flowing over the surrounding country; but she had no thought of danger for herself, while all the generous instincts of her nature—for she was still a woman—were stirred at the danger to others.

She turned her horse and galloped back toward the camp; but, before she could get there, she saw the rush of the people out of the court-house, and the struggle to get on high ground, which soon became all too low for most of the inhabitants of the camp.

The hotel was one of the first to empty, and she saw a mob of fugitives from there, among whom she recognized most of the actors that had played in the strolling company, the night before.

She had been in the theater when the first disturbance occurred outside, and had seen the flashes of the pistols, when the drunken miners fired on the stranger, without waiting to hear him.

She had heard vague rumors of what he had said, but had not credited them, like the rest of the people. Now they had come true, she was fain to admit that he must have been a singularly brave man, to come so far, at such danger, to warn men who had shown themselves such bitter enemies to him.

But she had no time to indulge in any thoughts of this kind; for the water was rising round her as she rode, and it became plain that, no matter how far one might flee, the flood was faster than any one in the camp. It was not long before she found herself surrounded in low ground, and began the struggle that Louis Badeau had noticed, when he plunged in to her rescue.

She had almost lost control of her pony as it began to swim; but managed to keep its head straight till she felt the ground again, and at last reached the clump of trees, where she was joined, not long afterward, by Louis, who climbed out of the water as if pretty well tired, and observed, with a laugh:

"Well, senorita, I came here to help you, but it seems that you were able to take care of yourself."

She recognized him as he spoke, and her face flushed as she remembered the last time she had seen him.

"I am not in the habit of asking help from any one, sir," she said coldly. "But, all the same, I am grateful to you for your intentions."

He made no answer; but looked out over the dark flood that surrounded them, and watched the floating objects, as they swept past.

Presently he spied something which caused him to go to the edge of the water, as if preparing to plunge in again.

The action attracted Juanita's attention, and she cried impulsively:

"Don't try it, sir. I had hard work to get here, and the current runs like a rapid in the mountains."

But he made no reply. His attention was fixed on the water, and she followed his gaze and saw what had caught it.

Something like a log of wood was being washed down from the direction of the Gulch, and on it were two figures, while one of them, from the dress, looked like a woman.

Louis turned his head to Juanita. "If you will lend me your horse," he said, "I can save those people."

She hesitated.

"I don't think you can," she said, "And, besides, if you lose the horse, what am I to do?"

The young man's lip curled, as he replied: "Very well, then, I suppose I shall have to do without the horse."

And he waded into the water, directly in the path of the floating object, which was fast nearing the grove.

The woman on the bank hesitated a moment, and then, as if her conscience overcame her, she called out to him:

"Here, take the horse, if you must."

He made no objection, but came back to the bank, where she had dismounted from the animal, and rode into the water again. The advantage was evident as soon as the log came near. He could go deeper than on foot, and the horse, not being above its knees, was steadier than otherwise, from the weight on its back.

Nearer and nearer floated the log, and, as it approached, they could see that the woman on it was accompanied by a little boy, whom she appeared to be comforting, for her arm was round him as she knelt on the log, while he was shivering with fear.

Her back was turned to Louis as the log came on, and he could not see her face, while she was unaware of the rescue that was near her.

He shouted to attract her attention, and she gave a start, while Juanita watched her intently, as the scene became interesting.

The girl on the bank saw the log come close to the waiting horseman, till it passed within a foot of his extended hand.

Then he urged his horse forward a step or two, and got the end of the log in his hand, by a projecting branch.

The rapid current whirled the end of the log round, and nearly pulled the pony off its feet, while Louis called out to the woman:

"Creep along! Creep along, or it will be forced out of my hand. I can't hold it much longer."

The woman seemed to be quick-witted and courageous, for she did as he directed, and the child crept on with her, till close to the horse, Louis all the time holding on to the branch, the cords standing out on his arms, and his face showing the intensity of the struggle with the current.

At last, just as they were almost touching him, he shouted:

"Jump! Jump! It is going!"

The woman rose to her feet and made a spring, but at that very moment the log left the hand that could no longer retain its grasp, and the woman uttered a shriek:

"*Louis, Louis, save me!*"

He dashed forward with the pony and caught her as she was falling into the water, when the log floated off, with the child still on it, and went off down the stream.

The young man on the pony had a hard struggle to get back to the land, for the animal had ventured in so deep that it was nearly swept off its feet.

Then Juanita, who had been watching the scene intently, uttered a stifled exclamation, as she saw that the woman whom Louis Badeau had just saved was the original of the portrait which Colonel Vandervoort had shown her.

What was more, she also recognized in her one of the actresses who had played in the theater the night before, in one of the inferior characters; and the face of the jealous woman grew dark as she looked, and ground her teeth to think of the chance that had brought them together at such a juncture.

But Louis and the strange girl did not seem to be thinking of anything but their salvation, and the danger that still menaced the little boy who was floating off down the current.

There were a few hurried words, in which

Juanita caught nothing that she could clearly understand, and then the young man turned to her to say:

"Will you lend me your horse again to rescue that boy? He is a relative, and I did not know he was here till this moment. He is young and timid, and if he be not taken now, he may lose his head and fall off into the water."

Juanita compressed her lips spitefully.

"You can do nothing to save him. If he has sense, he will stick to the log, and get off, the same as everybody else. My horse is my own, and I do not propose to lend it any more."

"Very well, then," said Louis, coldly. "You compel me to do what I did before."

Then he turned to the girl, and said to her in a low voice:

"Good-by, Louise. I will save him, or else—"

She seemed to understand him, for her face clouded as if she were suffering a severe mental struggle, but it ended as she said:

"God bless you, Louis. You were always good."

Then she kissed him quietly, while Juanita, who was watching them like a cat, ground her teeth in impotent jealousy.

Louis plunged into the water, and swam away with long, powerful strokes, as if he had been used to the water from his childhood.

The log was floating away with the rapidity that the current gave it; but the swimmer went with much greater swiftness, and they saw him nearing it as he went on, while the poor child on the piece of wood seemed to have lost his senses, and was kneeling down and wringing his hands.

The two women on the bank under the trees watched attentively, and saw the dark spot that marked Louis Badeau's head diminishing in size as it neared the log, while another island, formed by the flood, began to intercept the view as the current swept the two nearer and nearer to it. At last the girl called Louise uttered a sigh of thankfulness, as she saw that Louis had reached the log at last, and was climbing on it, as they neared the distant island.

Then she was startled by the voice of Juanita, in cold, sarcastic tones, saying:

"You are very glad to see him safe, are you not? You love him dearly."

The young girl who had been saved from the flood looked round at Juanita for the first time. She had not noticed her before, in the excitement of her own escape and the danger that still affected the boy.

Now she faced a woman who looked like a demon, as she glared at her rival; and Louise, who was a timid, shrinking creature at the best of times, faltered before the gaze of the strangely-attired woman, and asked her:

"What?—why? madam; what is the matter?"

Juanita curled her lip at the question.

"Matter? What should you think is the matter? How came you here, and who are you? Are you his wife or not?"

The girl faltered and retreated from the fierce eyes of the strange woman, who had her hand on a pistol while she was talking, and glared at her like a hungry tiger.

"His wife?" she said, hesitatingly. "Whose wife? I am Louise Bonneville, and I—"

She was not allowed to finish the sentence; for the furiously jealous woman beside her had drawn a pistol in a moment, and, crying:

"Then you shall never be Louise Badeau," fired.

Without waiting to see whether the shot had taken effect, she leaped on the back of the pony, that had been standing there all the time, and dashed into the water, waving the pistol like a maniac and laughing wildly.

CHAPTER XXX.

JUANITA'S JEALOUSY.

JUANITA, as she rode into the water, looked back and saw that the girl she had shot had fallen on the ground and lay there. She uttered another triumphant laugh at the sight, and then urged her horse for a few more steps, when it suddenly lost its feet and was swept away by the raging torrent, as if it had lost all control of itself.

She and her pony were swept down the

stream, but she directed the course of the animal toward the island where she had seen the boy and his savior land, as she thought; for the log was now floating away, and there was no one on it.

It was a long and hard struggle to get there, but at last she felt that her pony had touched bottom, and, in a few minutes after, she had reached the island, where she saw Louis and the little boy beneath the trees, the boy's head on the young man's lap, while he was busily chafing the child's temples.

The splashing of her horse, as it climbed the bank, did not disturb them; but Louis looked up as she came close by, and said, with a grave air:

"Don't make any more noise than you can help. He is but a child, and his nerves are shattered by the danger he has run."

Juanita uttered a short laugh, as she retorted:

"They may well be shattered. So would yours be, if you knew what I have just done."

Something in her tone attracted his attention, and he looked up at her.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Juanita waved her hand with a taunting smile.

"You are a fool," she said, "to think that a woman like me would forgive a slight, such as you put on me. You left her alone with me, and you will never see her again alive."

And again she waved her hand, this time with a wild laugh of triumph, which had something maniacal in it.

Louis Badeau had turned paler and paler, as he listened to the ravings of the furious woman; and, when she had finished, he laid down the head of the boy and rose to his feet.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you have killed her?"

Juanita laughed aloud.

"Fool, do you think that a woman like me ever forgives? Yes, she is dead, dead! You will never kiss her again, before me! Do you hear?"

The fire flashed from her eyes as she spoke and she wore the aspect of a demon.

As for Louis, he seemed to be stunned by the news; for he stood there, silent, as she spoke; and it was not till her taunting laugh had died away, and she faced him, with a look in her face as if she was beginning to realize at last what she had done, that he spoke.

Then he said slowly:

"Woman, God forgive you for what you have done. She was as harmless as this child here, and had done you no wrong. But you are a woman, and therefore I cannot hurt you. God forgive you. Out of my sight, accursed murderess, and may the form of your victim haunt you, till the day of judgment! Away!"

There was something in his air and the way he spoke that awed even the maddened woman before him, and she dropped her eyes for a moment. Then she tossed her head, as she said:

"I will go; and as for your curses, let them recoil on your own head. I wished to be your friend, and you rejected me with scorn. I have had my revenge; and my consolation is that you will be miserable hereafter. Ah! Does that sting you at last?"

And with that, she wheeled her horse again and dashed into the water, which carried her away from his sight with the more rapidity that, by this time, even the place whereon he stood was surrounded by the flood, and there was but a space of about half an acre, above the water.

Louis gazed after her, and saw that her horse was swimming fast before the current, which was becoming more rapid every minute.

Then he returned and sat down by the child he had saved, resting his head on his hand as if stunned. The child was but about seven years old, and had been one of those unhappy little creatures, stunted and worn out before their time, by late hours at the theater. He had been a member of the company, and had played many child parts, to great applause, but with corresponding strain on his tender frame and mind. The fright of the flood had completely broken him down. He shivered as the young man bent over him, and asked apprehensively:

"Is she gone, cousin Louis?"

Louis bent his head.

"She is, thank God, Jack. May we never see her again, is my hope."

The child looked up at him gratefully.

"How good you are to me, Louis," he said. "If you had not come when you did, I should have been down in the dark muddy water now."

Louis smoothed his hair absently.

"Yes, Jack. You are all safe now. No one shall harm you."

"And Louise?" asked the boy, lifting his head. "Where is sister Louise? Is she drowned?"

"I hope not, Jack. I left her safe," was the only reply the young man made; but his eyes were straining over the water to the distant grove, where he had left the two women, in the hope that he might see something stirring. He could not bring himself to believe that the words of Juanita could be true.

He sat there for some time longer, till the little boy seemed to have recovered his spirits entirely, and rose up with a cheerful face.

"I'm not frightened any longer, cousin Louis," he said. "I want to go and find Louise."

Then Louis rose too, and went down to the water's edge, when he uttered an exclamation of surprise. The water had receded as rapidly as it had risen, and already the bank was visible for ten feet below the mark where it had been.

Louis turned to the child.

"Jack," he said softly. "In a little more we shall be able to go to Louise. The water is falling every minute."

Even the child could understand this; for the proof was before his eyes, and the rapidity with which the water fell showed that it was already exhausted at the fountain head.

Inch by inch they saw it go down, till the grove, in which they were, was no longer an island; but an expanse of ground was visible round them, all covered with mud, it was true, but still in a condition passable to both.

No sooner had it got to this state, than Louis said to the boy:

"Are you ready to go and find Louise, Jack?"

The child smiled and held out his hand.

"I'm ready, cousin Louis. I won't be afraid any more, now you are with me."

Then the young man stepped down into the mud, and set out for the grove in which he had left the two women.

He walked slowly, for he was tired, and the mud was by no means easy to traverse. The child kept pace with him without difficulty, and so, hand in hand, they traversed the plain of mud and water, part of the time up to their ankles, but all the time advancing steadily, with the water falling constantly.

At last they had come to the foot of the knoll on which the women had been left, and Louis turned to the child, to say:

"Jack, would you dare to be alone for a minute or two? I want to go first, and then I will call you."

The child hesitated, and trembled again.

"Must I stay alone, Louis?" he asked, with a quiver of his lip that showed how he dreaded the idea. "Can't I go with you?"

Louis hesitated in his turn.

"Jack," he said in a low tone, "I am afraid that some harm has happened to Louise. I don't see her there, and I fear it will frighten you still more."

The child turned deadly pale.

"What can have happened to her?" he asked. "We left her there. Do you think she is drowned?"

Louis shook his head.

"No, I do not; but are you sure that you will not cry out, whatever we see?"

Jack took his hand closely.

"It will be very good, if you only won't let me stay here all alone, Louis. You don't know how it frightens me. I will be good, if you will only let me come with you."

Louis grasped his hand firmly, and led him on to the knoll, which they ascended.

No sooner had he cast his eyes over the ground, than he spied the form of the girl he was seeking, extended on the grass at the foot of a tree, with her face turned away from him, resting on her arm, as if she were asleep.

He uttered a stifled moan, and went forward slowly, till he could see the face. Then

he gave a start and rushed to her, lifting her head and feeling anxiously at her heart.

A sob of joy broke from him as he felt that it was beating yet, and he turned to the child, who stood there, pale and trembling, but still quiet and collected, as he had promised.

"Jack," he said, "Louise has been hurt; but she is not dead. Don't be frightened."

Then he had time to examine the insensible body beside him.

A streak of blood, that had already almost dried, marked one side of her temple, and Louis could see that it proceeded from a scalp wound, that had grazed the top of her head, the bullet plowing the skull, but apparently not doing any fatal damage.

He told the child to go down and get some water in his hat; and, when Jack came back, he dashed the fluid into the face of the unconscious girl, who shivered and moaned, and then opened her eyes to gaze at him.

Louis uttered an exclamation of thankfulness.

"Louise, you were not killed!"

She stared at him vaguely.

"Killed? No, but—my head feels so—what has happened to me? How came I here?"

"Never mind," he said, soothingly. "You were hurt; but it is all right now. I went off after Jack, and here he is, safe and sound."

Then Jack came forward, half-crying, half-laughing:

"Oh Louise, I'm so glad you ain't dead. I thought you was, when I saw you."

Her eyes lighted up with a faint smile as she said in a half-whisper:

"Poor Jack! He was so frightened, Louis."

Then she closed her eyes again, and an expression of pain crossed her face.

"My head hurts so," she murmured.

He bathed it carefully and as she felt the cool water, she murmured:

"How good you are to me!"

Then there was a long silence, as the half-sensible girl appeared to be dozing, and the stunning effect of the shot gradually passed from her.

At last she opened her eyes again, and said:

"I feel better, Louis; but, oh, what a time I had to find you."

"Don't talk about it," he said soothingly. "There is plenty of time when you get well. I can wait till then."

She smiled faintly.

"I am better already, as long as I have seen you. Let me talk a little."

He smoothed her hair softly.

"If you *must* talk, I suppose you must. But I can wait."

"But I want to say something, Louis. You don't know how I came here. Did you know mother was dead?"

"No. Poor Louise! how you must have suffered!"

"I did, at first; but perhaps it was best that I had to work; for work and need give no time for sorrow. You know I used to act, when you were home, and a stroke of fortune threw into my way a manager, who offered me a position. It was not much, for he was only a strolling actor, who had hard work to get along; but he offered to take Jack and me, and give us enough to live on, and a chance to do what we could. But, oh, Louis, you don't know what a hard struggle it is. It is so different to acting among one's friends. The men are so rude, and the women—oh, they are dreadful! But I did not mind, when they told me the company was going to the mining-regions; for then I knew I should find you at last. And I am so glad now—so glad!"

Then she lay back and closed her eyes once more, as if thoroughly exhausted, and Louis sat beside her till he saw that she had fallen into a doze, from which he did not seek to waken her.

Her head lay on his lap still, and he did not dare to stir, for fear of wakening her; but his eyes roamed over the plain, and he saw that the flood had subsided almost entirely, and that figures were moving about in the mud, some on horseback; while the child, whose curious and excitable disposition prevented him from resting quiet, was watching them eagerly.

Presently he came back to Louis, from

where he had been standing, and whispered excitedly:

"They are coming here, cousin. Oh, do you think it is any more people to try and kill Louise?"

Louis shook his head.

"No one will hurt her now, Jack; but do not be afraid if they come after me."

The boy opened his eyes wide.

"After you, Louis! Why, what have you done that they should come after you?"

Louis set his lips firmly, for he felt very bitter at the moment.

"What have I done, Jack? Nothing but try to save their lives. But that is enough here to entitle a man to death. Let them come. I shall not resist them, and they can have their will."

The boy did not seem to understand what he meant; but watched the coming of a party of horsemen, who were slowly threading their way through the muddy flat left by the flood, and coming straight toward the grove.

As they came nearer, Louis, who watched them all the time, saw that they were three in number, and thought that he recognized the figure of the man who rode at the head of the other two.

A fourth horseman was off at one side of the three; but, as they approached the grove, he rode up to them, and Louis saw the plumes in the head-dress of an Indian.

A closer scrutiny revealed the presence of Digger Jim and Whisky Charley, as two of the horsemen, while one of the others was the "Angel"—so-called—and the figure of the last man was unfamiliar, but the young man thought, from a white sling in which his arm hung, that it could be none other than the alcalde of the Gulch, whom he had left in the mountains.

The whole party was coming from the plains, and not from the direction of the town, and they appeared to be searching for something.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER THE FLOOD.

It was indeed the Alcalde of Dead Man's Gulch, with his captors from the mountains, and they had ridden hard, all the morning, to get there.

After they had made sure that the men left in the mountains, whom they had seen by the wagon, were past saving, they had ridden at speed to save the people of the town, if it were possible; but had arrived too late to do anything, and had been compelled to take a wide detour to avoid being involved in the flood themselves.

Now they were coming up slowly, for the mud was deep and their way difficult.

Louis looked at them with a vague idea that they had come to rescue him, at least that The Angel had so intended; but the presence of the alcalde, who was free, though unarmed, did not look as if they intended to hold him as a hostage for the safe return of the prisoner to the Gulchers.

He saw them coming closer and closer to the grove, but they did not appear to be looking that way, and would have passed it altogether, had it not been for the keen-sighted Indian in the advance, who caught a view of the child, standing gazing curiously at them, and immediately turned his pony that way, and rode up.

Little Jack was frightened and ran to Louis; for the face of the Indian scared him.

It was Whisky Charley, and, the moment his eyes fell on the form of Louis, he raised a shrill yell that was echoed by Digger Jim in the rear, and came galloping up, his broad face wreathed in smiles as he cried:

"Bully boy! Bully boy! Got um sure!"

Louis looked up at him. There was no mistaking the happiness of the Indian.

Charley Jones came up soon after, with the alcalde and the other Indian, and his first words were:

"Well, we didn't expect to find you here, Badeau. Met a lot of galoots outside, and they told us you was in the jail, and that the building had been swept away in the flood."

"No fault of theirs that I was not there," the young man said. "They had me there, and had made ready to hang me, for nothing but trying to save their lives. The flood scared them all, and I got a chance to escape in the confusion. What are you going to do

now? As soon as the crowd gets over its scare, your lives are no safer than mine."

Here the alcalde, who had said nothing as he came up, interposed:

"Mr. Badeau, I admit that the men at the Gulch have treated you badly; but you shall find that they are not so bad as you think them. I am going into the camp, now, what is left of it; and if I don't make them apologize to you, for the past, my name is not Abraham Bogart."

The alcalde was a man of better education than the rest of the miners; and he showed it by the language he used when he was in earnest. He looked in earnest now, and continued to Charley Jones, who listened attentively:

"Mr. Jones, you would not trust me with my weapons; but I ask you now to trust me to go to the camp alone. Will you do it?"

Charley hesitated.

"What do you want to go there for?" he asked. "We can't afford to give away points, you know; for, now the flood's over, we are only four, and you have a hundred men ready to come for us."

"I know that, and yet I ask you to trust me. I give my word that if you will, you shall never repent it."

Charley, who was cautious, from his life in the midst of danger, was about to refuse, when Louis Badeau looked up quickly.

"Let him go," he said quietly. "I am not afraid that man will break his word. But if you are men fit to be called men, help me to take care of this lady, who has been hurt."

The alcalde immediately jumped off his horse, saying:

"Take the pony if you want it, sir. I can go on foot, as well as mounted."

Louis looked up at him gratefully.

"You are very kind, sir; but that is not what is needed. Do you know a woman named Juanita?"

The alcalde nodded.

"Certainly I do. What of her?"

"She shot this poor girl, in her mad jealousy, and I want her to be taken somewhere where she can find shelter. The sun is getting low and the night air is chilly."

Alcalde Bogart looked concerned. He had the instincts of a gentleman, and the sight of the poor girl before him, with her pale face and the dark streak of blood on her forehead, was enough to shock any man.

He cast a hasty glance at the distant town, and remarked hesitatingly:

"If we could manage to get her there, I think we could take care of her. There are a few buildings there yet as far as I can see, and she is welcome to the best in the town, if I have any say in the matter."

Charley Jones seemed pleased at the speech; for he said emphatically:

"Alcalde, you're a white man, all over. The best thing we can do is to make a litter and carry the lady into town. None of the boys will disturb us, if we do."

"You are right, there," the alcalde said. "The man that interferes with you, will have to deal with me; and the boys at the Gulch won't go back on me, I think."

Then Charley Jones addressed the Indians, who both dismounted, and, with Indian ingenuity, made up a litter, that they slung between two of the ponies. It was constructed of long springy poles, which they cut from the branches of the trees in the grove, fastened a blanket between, so that the girl could lie comfortably. All the time they had been there, she had not stirred from the heavy slumber which had overtaken her, when she had finished her story to Louis. The shock to her brain had stupefied her, and she was not conscious of the noise round her, not awaking even when the bearers took up the litter and began their slow progress toward the town.

As they approached it, they saw groups of disconsolate people, gathered round the ruins of the buildings which had been swept away.

The Eureka House was the only one that had resisted the flood entirely, and that stood up by itself, looking the more conspicuous from its lonely condition.

The late inhabitants of the camp were wandering about in the ruins, looking for what property they might be able to save, and finding little to reward them; for the water had made a clean sweep.

As the little cavalcade approached, they

hardly looked at it, though there were a few faint cheers as they saw the alcalde, whom they had believed dead.

His companions did not attract attention, and the men seemed too intent on searching for their lost property, to heed anything else.

Up to the Eureka House they went, and the alcalde entered and demanded that the best room in the house should be given up for the use of the lady who had been injured.

When the proprietor hesitated, the magistrate told him that he would be responsible for any charge that might be made, and the host at once became obsequious.

In a little time afterward, Louise Bonneville (as she had announced her name to Juanita, when the latter had asked for it) was safe in bed in a room in the house, and a woman who had belonged to the company, and had remained there through all the confusion for very terror, was installed as nurse. Louis Badeau went out with the alcalde and the child, and found that the house was full, down-stairs, with a crowd of miners, who were trying to drown their sorrow at their losses in drinking what liquor was left at the bar, paying out all the gold-dust they had about them, which was not much.

The town seemed to be entirely demoralized at the effect of the flood; and as soon as the miners saw Louis, they seemed to be ashamed of themselves, for one of them came up to him, held out his hand, and said:

"Shake, pard. I never thought I'd have to say I were sorry fur havin' done anything to a stranger; but I'm darnation sorry that we hunted ye out of the town, the way we did last night. Ef we had listened to you, we mou't be better off to-day."

There was no more talk of lynching now, even when Charley Jones entered the bar-room, half in doubt whether he would not be attacked.

Men looked askance at him; but no one offered to molest him, the more, perhaps, that the little gambler was armed to the teeth, and that the alcalde was with him, evidently on the best of terms. Since they had been in town, there had been no more talk of hostages or doubt of the sincerity of Alcalde Bogart. His honesty was made plain in everything he did.

Louis Badeau wandered to the door with the child, and stood there, gazing up the street, and thinking over what he should do next, when he saw a figure coming from the plain without, on horseback.

A second glance showed him that Juanita was coming into the town once more, on her pony.

She rode up to the door of the house, not noticing any one till she was close by. Then she curled her lip and threw herself from her pony, entering the house with a defiant air, her hand near her pistol, all the time.

The young man said nothing, but he kept his eyes riveted on her, and her own glance sunk under his for a moment.

She raised it again with a defiant stare, and asked him in a tone of menace:

"Do you see anything singular about me, that you stare a lady out of countenance?"

The miners heard her and turned around to look, for every one in town knew Juanita, and most of them feared her, on account of her quick shooting, and the fact that no one liked to have any trouble with a woman.

Louis saw that he would have to say something; for all were looking at him.

"I was looking," he said, quietly, "to see if the blood of the poor girl you shot to-day was on your hands yet."

She flushed deeply, and then turned pale.

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked him in a low furious tone. "Do you want me to shoot you too, or are you mad?"

Louis folded his arms.

"You can shoot me, if you please," he answered; "It is your way to shoot those who cannot defend themselves. But your malice, this time, is unavailing. The girl you thought you had killed is yet alive, and will be my wife as soon as we can find a clergyman. Now shoot, if you like."

In a moment, with a shrill curse in Spanish, the half-crazed woman had whipped out a pistol, when her arm was seized from behind, and the rough voice of Jim Barnes, the Forty Niner, was heard, as the old miner said:

"No, no, Juanita, I'm a friend of yours; but that won't do at all. That man saved all our lives, or we wouldn't be hyar to-day. He ain't to be shot daown like a nigger, fur he's the whitest man in these hyar diggin's."

She struggled violently, but with no avail, while the miners looked stolidly on, used as they were to fighting of all kinds.

At last Jim wrenched the pistol from her hand, when she drew away from him with last struggle, and whipped out another, which she fired before the miner could get it from her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

THE flash and report were simultaneous, and, as the shot sped, Louis Badeau felt a sharp pain in his side, and staggered back.

For a moment he thought he was hurt badly; but the weakness that would have accompanied such an injury was absent, for he was able to stand, and the very sharpness of the pain convinced him that it could be but a graze.

Before Juanita, who seemed to have gone fairly crazy, could repeat the shot, her remaining pistol was seized by Jim Barnes, and the big miner, now thoroughly angry, wrenched it from her hand, shouting:

"Naow, I tell ye, that's enough, gal."

And the miners, who at any other time would have joined in with her, were so much changed, from the effect of the flood, that they actually sided with Jim, and helped to disarm the raging woman, who, now that she was defeated in her wild scheme, raved and wept alternately, showing, for the first time, that she was a woman, by her very weakness.

Louis, who had recovered his coolness, examined the track of the shot she had fired at him, and found that it had torn a hole in his jacket and shirt, and grazed his side with a long but shallow flesh wound, from which the blood was dripping, but which had not touched his life, or done more than to sting him severely.

When this was ascertained, he pushed forward through the crowd which still surrounded Juanita, and spoke to Jim Barnes.

"Let the woman go. I am not hurt much, and I don't wish her punished. She is punished enough already."

"No, no," cried Juanita, wildly. "I tried to murder him and I will do it again, if you let me live. Kill me, I tell you. I don't want to live. Kill me, if you are men."

"That's jest the reason we won't do no sich thing," interrupted Jim Barnes, in a soothing way. "Now don't ye go to havin' conniptions, Juanita. It's all right. Ef ye don't like these diggin's, thar's plenty of other places in the mines whar a gal like you kin git on. Take my advice, and git up and git."

There was an approving murmur from the miners, and, had Juanita been a man, she would doubtless have taken the warning and departed; but, being by this time fairly frantic, she had to be half forced, half led out of the room, and the men drew a sigh of relief as she disappeared, with one of the girls who hung round the camp; her first symptom of femininity being that she clung to the company of one of her own sex, and submitted at last to be led away.

Then the alcalde, who had taken no part in the disturbance, but had watched Juanita as if she were of no more importance than a fly, cleared his throat and said aloud:

"And now, gentlemen, there is something to do for the honor of Dead Man's Gulch. I hear that this gentleman came here last night, and tried to warn you all that the flood was coming; and that, instead of listening to him, you shot at him and put him into the jail, where he was this morning, when the water came and nigh drowned you all out. Is that so?"

Jim Barnes's voice was the only one audible in the hush that followed.

"That's true as Gospel, alcalde; and hyar's the man that kin back up what he says. More than that. This hyar gentleman has been shot at by everybody you kin think on, at Dog-Town and this hyar place; and he don't owe the boys nothen' but grudges. But, instead of payin' them, he come daown and saved all our lives, as fur as he were able. I say that sich conduct as that oughter

be remembered, and the boys oughter do euther; fur, as fur as my pinion goes, I reckon he's jest the whitest man in the mines, and rub that aout ef ye kin, boys. I had my sheer at the work, afore I come hyar. I hunted fur that gentleman, and he got the best of me in fa'r fight. What did he do, then? He mou't hev finished me, fur I deserved it. Did he do it? Not he. He nussed me like a babby, and what did he git fur that? Why, the skunks come and fired inter his tent, thinkin' to kill him, and hit me instead. He was chased aout of Dog-Town by men he'd never done a harm to in all his life; and he fou't 'em like a man all the time. Then thar was Cunnel Vandervoort, my pardner. He thought he'd hev a shy at this gentleman, jest 'cause he were a stranger, and he got the wu'st of it, too. Every one what's gone arter him, to fight, has got the wu'st of it, and this gentleman hain't born' no malice to no one, fur it all. He's jest gone on, and at last he come hyar. Then, you galoots, hyar, must needs believe all that the men from Dog-Taown told ye abaout him, and go arter him too. And he got the best of ye all, till ye hunted him daown with the alcalde's posse, and driv him to the maountings. He were safe thar, and mou't hev staid thar. But he didn't. Why didn't he? You know why he didn't. He come daown hyar, at the risk of his own life, to save yourn. That's what I call actin' like a white man; ain't it? Is thar a man hyar white enough to hev done the same?"

There was no answer, and Jim looked round him with an air of triumph as he went on:

"Then I say he deserves the name, and long may it stick to him, of the whitest man in the mines. Who says he don't?"

Again there was no answer till the alcalde took off his hat and waved it, with the words:

"Gentlemen, I propose three cheers for the whitest man in the mines."

That set them all going; and they shouted with a will and crowded around Louis Badeau, who was, for the first time since he had been in the mining districts, overcome.

What persecution had failed to do, kindness had done; and the tears actually came into his eyes, as he listened to the cheering, and saw the change in the faces that surrounded him. From that moment he felt that he was accepted as one of the community, and that he would no longer be forced to be one against a hundred.

A year has passed over the little settlement of Dead Man's Gulch, and a great change has come over it during that time.

The placer diggings have long been exhausted; but, high up the Gulch, stands a tall chimney, the mark of the stamping and smelting-works of the Eureka Mining Company, which had, at that early date, begun the less profitable, but much surer work, of attacking the native home of the precious metals, in the quartz rocks, and substituting scientific processes for the hap-hazard methods of the early diggers.

The camp had disappeared; and the shiftless prospectors, who had wandered over the face of the country, searching for gold in the sands of the streams, had gone with it.

Dead Man's Gulch had gone, even to its name, and the new town was called Eureka, rejoicing in frame-houses by the hundred, and a mayor, instead of the alcalde of old.

The place had a prosperous air, and the people that inhabited it had the same look about them, coming of regular wages and good food.

The old population had dispersed, and the men in the streets no longer wore weapons as they walked, while there was a little church, already in progress of erection.

The superintendent of the new mines up the Gulch was standing at the mouth of the shaft that pierced the hill, talking to the foreman of the miners, who was none other than Jim Barnes, though the aspect of the rugged old Forty-Niner was much changed for the better. Jim looked fat and hearty and wore good clothes, while his companion was dressed in the style of a civilized gentleman, very different from the coarse garb that had been used by the early miners.

"Jim," said the new superintendent, "when I look down at the old place, and

think of all we two have gone through, it seems like a dream."

The Forty-Niner nodded.

"So it does to me, Mr. Badeau. But thar ain't no rubbin' aout one thing."

"And what's that, Jim?"

"That you took a turn when the flood come. Afore that, you was hunted like a wild beast, and the very waggin that you had, all loaded with what you'd made honest, was liable to be taken from ye, and all the money stole."

Louis Badeau smiled as he answered:

"That is very true; but I had faith, all the time, that right must triumph in the end. The wagon contained all I had in the world, but it would not have been half so much, had it not been for the persecutions to which I was subjected, when I first went into Dog-Town."

Jim looked mystified.

"Haow d'ye make that out?"

"I'll tell you. When I first entered Dog-Town, if I had been left alone, I should have done like the rest of you: dug my gold in the poor diggings there; so that I should have saved little. But when I was driven from there, I went up into the mountains, where I never should have gone otherwise, and there I found more gold than I could have dreamed of, in ten years, at the diggings. That gold was the foundation of my success. With it I bought my stock, and made my first profit. Since then, that profit has doubled and trebled itself, and, all the time, I was only thinking of one thing, how to make the diggings a staple and permanent thing. As soon as I got the capital, I started here, and you know the result; but if it had not been for the persecutions of the Dog-Town boys, I never should have been where I am to-day."

Jim Barnes scratched his head.

"Wa'al," he said, "my ole mother used ter read her Bible a good deal, and tell me a sight abaout 'all things workin' together fur good,' but I never believed in it till naow. It's true as gospel. Ef the boys hadn't driv' ye to the hills, ye mou't never have made fri'nds with the Injuns; and, though I hate Injuns like p'izen, thar ain't no denyin' that they sarved ye a good turn, fur they give ye a chance to 'arn the name, and 'arn it honest, of

THE WHITEST MAN IN THE MINES.

THE END.

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